

*Mary In
New Mexico
Constance Johnson*



Class PZ 7

Book J 6316

Copyright N^o Ma

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT copy 2

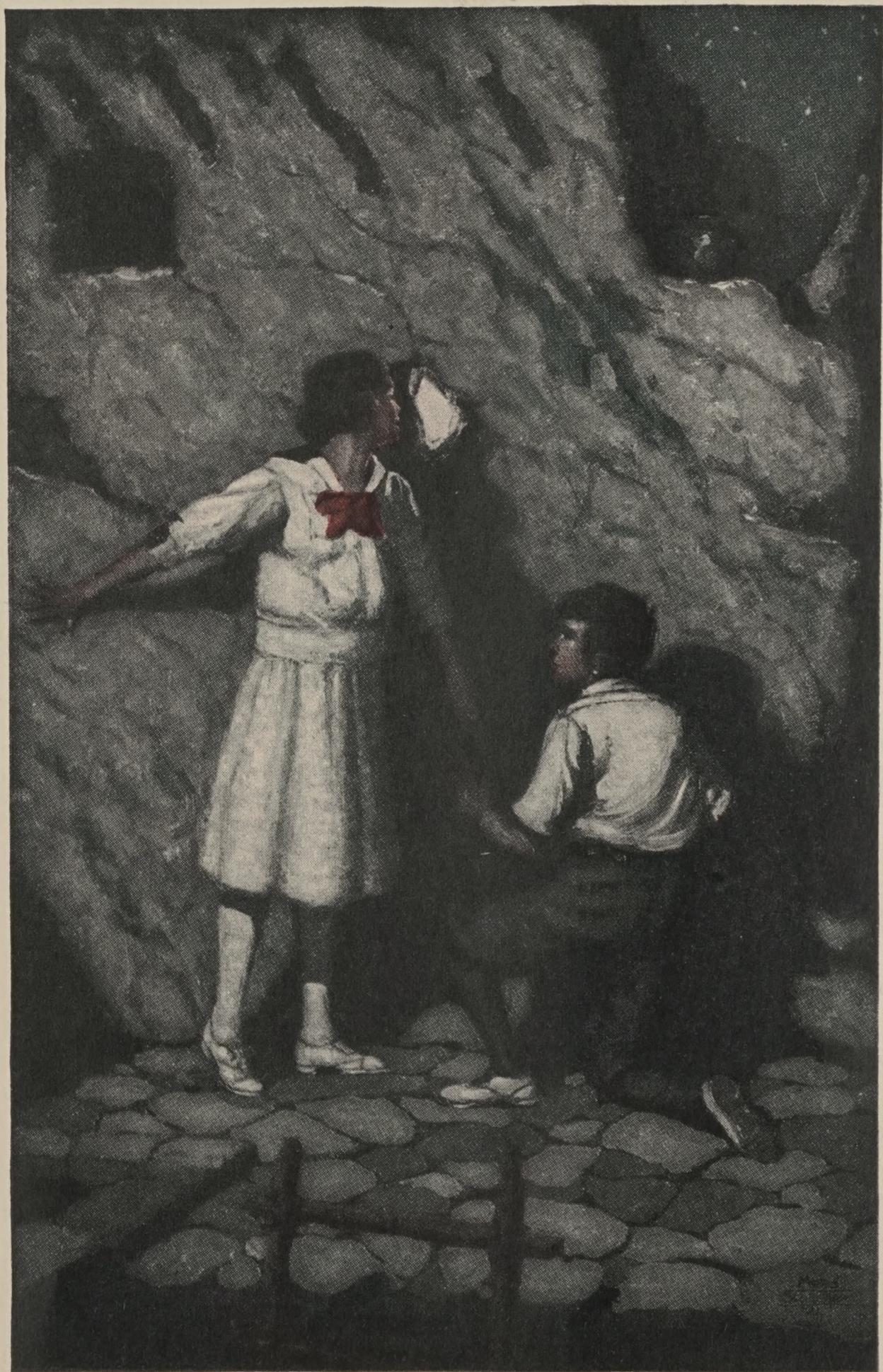
MARY IN NEW MEXICO



THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
NEW YORK • BOSTON • CHICAGO • DALLAS
ATLANTA • SAN FRANCISCO

MACMILLAN & CO., LIMITED
LONDON • BOMBAY • CALCUTTA
MELBOURNE

THE MACMILLAN CO. OF CANADA, LTD.
TORONTO



Mary and Dave discover the bandit.

MARY IN NEW MEXICO

BY
CONSTANCE JOHNSON

A UTHOR OF "WHEN MOTHER LETS US COOK," "WHEN MOTHER
LETS US HELP," "TRAVEL IN FRANCE," "PARODIES FOR
HOUSEKEEPERS" (WITH BURGESS JOHNSON), ETC.

FRONTISPIECE BY MEAD SCHAEFFER AND
PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN BY THE AUTHOR



New York
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1921

All rights reserved

Copy 2

PRINTED IN UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

PZ 7
J 6316
Ma
copy 2

COPYRIGHT, 1921
By THE MACMILLAN COMPANY ✓

Set up and electrotyped. Published November, 1921



©CL A627673 ✓
R

FERRIS PRINTING COMPANY
NEW YORK

NOV 10 1921 ✓

no 2

TO MIRIAM JARVIS JOHNSON

who may be able to find

herself in the story

FOREWORD

There are so many adventures to be told about New Mexico and the wonderful country there that one is puzzled how to begin and where to end.

This story is the result of one summer's experiences but now in this second summer I find many more tales that might be told, of visiting cow-punchers, of sheep herders driven off private grazing grounds, of hedgehogs, and mountain climbs, of travelers caught in sudden freshets.

It is needless to say that many of the incidents in this story are not strictly in accordance with fact! A second summer in the same beautiful mountains has proven almost any adventures possible and the author hopes that according to the old proverb, "If it is not true at least it is well imagined (*Si non e vero e ben trovato*)."

Thanks are due to Messrs. Scribner's & Sons for the use of material taken from *The Land of Poco Tiempo* by Charles F. Lummis.

Also to Messrs. Macmillan & Co. for some yarns from the *Old Santa Fe Trail* by Colonel Harry Inman. Both of these books are well worth reading, as they give an excellent account of the great South West both past and present.

I wish to thank also the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad for the use of two photographs.

Taos County, New Mexico,
August, 1921.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	A Momentous Decision	1
II.	A Cabin in the Rockies	10
III.	Rattlesnakes Past and Present	18
IV.	The Indian Mound and Its Treasure	29
V.	The Indian Cave	43
VI.	The Ring Is Sent Away	52
VII.	The Killing of the Steer	58
VIII.	Waiting for News	65
IX.	The Mail Robbery	70
X.	Mateo Seeks the Ring	80
XI.	The Taos Pueblo	92
XII.	A Long Day on the Mountains	102
XIII.	Captured by the Indians	114
XIV.	How It All Happened	121
XV.	An Amateur Fisherman	131
XVI.	On the Road to Santa Fe	141
XVII.	Where the Old and the New World Meet	157
XVIII.	An Old-fashioned Bandit	169
XIX.	Adventures in a Cliff Dwelling	180
XX.	The Mystery of the Empty Box	194
XXI.	The Shot that Missed—and Other Good Fortune	202

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
I. Mary and Dave discover the bandit	<i>Frontispiece</i>
II. "Get ap," she shouted lustily	16
III. The cave was full of echoes and lights	47
IV. Pueblo de Taos, showing an underground	
ceremonial chamber	92
V. Be sure to hold the horses tight	135

MARY IN NEW MEXICO

MARY IN NEW MEXICO

CHAPTER I

A MOMENTOUS DECISION

“**H**OW did you folks ever hear there was such a place as Jarosa?” asked the genial conductor-brakeman of the little western train.

“O, it’s on the map and also on the time-table,” we answered laughing.

But after all it was strange for the family of a New England country doctor to be traveling on that “mixed train,” half passenger, half freight, from Blanca to Jarosa very early one July morning.

On either side of the track stretched miles of gray-green sage-brush plain, with here and there a clump of tall cottonwood trees, and an irrigation ditch to indicate some isolated ranch. Far, far away the mountains.

In the seats behind were a flourishing group of swarthy “Americans,” who talked a steady stream of soft Spanish. The little dark children were as much interested as we in watching out of the windows for prairie dogs and jackrabbits. Each little mound between the sage bushes was a house whose owner might be seen sitting erect, its front legs hugging its fat stomach.

How had we heard of Jarosa? It had been only a name on a time-table—a connecting link between New England and New Mexico, and right on the border of Colorado, the last railroad station before we should be driven away into the mountains for a long glorious summer on a ranch. The whole trip had been one adventure from the time we had written an answer to an advertisement in a western paper.

The letter in reply had come, brought in by the Doctor while we sat on the porch—we four, Mary, Dave, Trixy and I. It told of a little five-room log cabin, surrounded by fruit trees and pines, and looking toward the continental divide, somewhere in the Rockies, 7500 feet above sea-level. The owner lived near in his adobe ranch house and raised cows and alfalfa. He had beside, a wife and two children. I felt from the first that it was what we wanted; and Mary, Dave and Trixy were unanimous in favor of going. It would mean riding, real horses—cow-ponies. Of course we must go!

There was a certain amount of surprised horror on the part of our relatives.

“Your landlord and his family may be terrible,” said one.

“The high climate may affect your hearts,” said another.

“The cabin may be filthy, disgusting,” said a third.

“Think of the long trip,” said Aunt Susan.

“Yes,” I said, “but think of such names as Valdez,

Taos, Hondo, San Joachim, Arroyo Seco. We can't find those in the Catskills."

Then after we had made the decision we had to decide what to take with us, what orders to send on for groceries and supplies. Mary and I spent many moments before the mirror in our new riding breeches. But it was generally agreed to take few new things. Old shoes, old fishing trousers, old hunting shirts, old gymnasium bloomers, overalls, bungalow aprons—these we collected. We felt that the hammock should go but we decided against bathing suits. We took fishing tackle and rods and quantities of blankets and comfortables, although we economized on towels and bed linen. We tried to think of all the possible medicines we would need, so far away from the corner drug store. A few toys for Trix seemed best to take and plenty of mosquito netting. If we had only known that ants, not mosquitoes were likely to prove annoying! Of course our friends gave us good advice. Like Jerome K. Jerome's famous traveler we could have filled several rooms with the things we were advised to take. But our future landlord had urged us to bring no trunks, so we had a suspicion that the less we took the better.

One day in June the Doctor started out to the unknown land, and three weeks later, when school was over, we four locked our peaceful door on the quiet town street and embarked on the great adventure. Mary, aged thirteen, in middy and blue skirt, a jaunty sailor hat on her light brown, bobbed

hair, insisted on carrying the largest bag. Dave and Trix, red haired and blue eyed and somewhat unreliable, carried odds and ends, a doll, a fishing pole, and packages. Dave had a knapsack which was always bumping about on the shoulders of his corduroy coat and generally getting in his way.

Dave objects to being classed with Trix. "It's not fair. I am nearly twelve, mother. I am lots older than she is," he would complain. But I cannot get over thinking of those two together.

For the first time Beatrix, aged six, was to be on a sleeper. It was an exciting moment. We had boxes and bundles and roll-ups and every other creature and those had to be carefully stowed away by a grinning porter. Then there was a certain amount of friction caused by the momentous questions of who should sit next the window and who should sit by mother and whose feet were soiling whose shoes. But finally we settled down temporarily and ate the lunch which an unsympathetic providence had brought from home. The children would have preferred the dining car. I confess that misgivings were in my heart at keeping three healthy quarrelsome youngsters contented for three days on a sleeping car. But the porters helped and the passengers helped. For the three are only quarrelsome with each other and are most friendly to strangers. Indeed Trixy's shrill little voice could be heard frequently from the observation car in intimate conversation with a portly Chicago gentleman. Then, too, the dining car with its little tables, its smiling,

willing waiters, its mysterious menu cards that had to be carefully studied, was a thing to look forward to for hours, a thing of joy to look back upon.

Trixy was filled with excitement at the porter as he made up the berth. She watched him as he opened the side of the car and apparently took from it all that was necessary to make her a comfortable bed, with a fascinating little light within easy reach of small hands. So the first two days passed, with glimpses of Chicago and Kansas City, and then the country began to be so new to us all that we kept our eyes fixed on the windows. The tiresome plains were done with. The distant beautiful mountains were well worth a long look, and near by in little mounds were whole villages of interesting prairie dogs.

We hunted for Pike's Peak for hours before it finally appeared in the distance, suddenly looming up by itself. We read how Pike had searched for it and ridden toward it but had finally given up the complete ascent, owing to the fact that the nearer he got, the farther off seemed the mountain. It always appeared to be within reach but never quite attainable.

All the time our train was climbing. At Denver we changed trains, and at Denver we enjoyed a last dish of ice-cream. It was a farewell to the life we knew so well, to drug stores of easy access, to formal Sunday dinners at grandfather's!

The next morning we were awakened before five by the faithful white-coated porter. In the dimness

of early morning we dressed and packed and at five-thirty got out of the through train and watched it steam away, leaving us standing with all our bags and baggage on the lonely platform at Blanca.

We were surrounded by space. Flat plains, distant purple crests, and a dozen or so of wooden houses which made up the village. Then we saw, apparently close to us, the rugged mountain rising without foothills, straight out of the plains, white-capped "Blanca" indeed. It fairly took our breath away, so beautiful it was in the early morning.

And now the interesting proprietor of the Blanca "Hotel" took charge of us—carried our luggage to his place and told us that breakfast would soon be ready.

There were a few people about even at that early hour. Trixy and Dave begged a ride of a countryman who was carting groceries from the station to a nearby store. Mary and I sat on the freight house platform while I knitted and she watched a couple of real Mexican cowboys, swarthy, with gay colored kerchiefs around their necks and broad-brimmed sombreros. Way off was a little toy train, at least so it appeared, which we were told would take us from Blanca to Jarosa.

And now we have gotten back to our starting point, the train to Jarosa. The engine switched about and Trix decided that she wanted a ride on it. "Go ask the engineer," was the reply to her teasing. So she went, hesitating slightly. But in a moment she had obtained permission from the friendly, smil-

ing man in overalls. He at least was an American. Up Trix climbed and went switching about with the engine, ringing the bell to warn off cows or prairie dogs.

Finally the cars were attached and we started. The two gay Mexican lads, black haired and handsome, stood on the rear platform, and first Dave, then Mary, then Trixy were attracted to them. Last of all I joined them. The conversation was friendly and courteous—the Mexicans spoke careful English and were naturally as interested in us as we were in them. There were two or three stations and at each we all got off the train and wandered around. No one was in a hurry, every one was friendly and happy.

So peacefully we reached Jarosa; the town we had looked forward to! A border town, with cheap wooden houses, many "restaurants" and eating places. There may have been churches. There certainly was a freight house which contained our trunks, we gratefully discovered.

Here we found an auto awaiting us. But as there were many who decided to ride in it beside ourselves, we could not take the trunks. However, the driver obligingly waited while a number of necessary things were taken out and piled into the car, which was now literally filled to overflowing. I shall always wonder, as I wondered at the time, why all the other passengers did not take the waiting stage instead of the private conveyance that we had hired for ourselves. Perhaps they were friends of the chauffeur.

The two Mexicans were still with us. They good-naturedly teased Dave and told him wild tales of Indians and beasts which he would find in the mountains. It seemed they had been to our ranch but had found it too lonely. "You ought to have seen the rattler they killed up there last year," said one. "It had fifteen rattles," replied the other gravely.

"Mr. Ransome has seen many bear tracks around," spoke the first. "Last winter they saw a number of mountain lions."

"Ho, you're just trying to stuff me," said Dave—but I could see that he wriggled a little uneasily.

"How far away is the big Indian pueblo?" asked one of the men.

"Not far, an Indian could easily ride over if he wished," said the second Mexican.

The mountains were close to us now, at least on one side. But still there were plains to be covered before we began to climb to the ranch. Now like prairie dog mounds appeared the little adobe houses of the Mexicans; the air was filled with the smell of the sage-brush. Far off were other mountains which seemed never to come nearer.

So we rode for miles till we reached Quanta, an adobe village in the foothills. The one-story houses, sometimes cream colored, sometimes pink or blue, with flat, grass-covered roofs, fascinated us. Here our driver suggested that food would be advisable; he reckoned it was quite a bit farther to the ranch and he guessed we'd get better food in the grocery store than at the hotel. So we followed his advice.

We bought crackers, cheese, potted meat, fruit and bread and butter and retired into the dark back room to eat. The proprietor brought a basin and towels so that we could wash.

"Do you think it's all right to eat here?" asked Dave. "My physiology book at school says it's bad to eat dirty food—that it poisons you!"

"I think it's perfectly safe," I replied. "There is a difference between dirty food and an untidy place to eat it in."

Mary was very much amused. She was also a little shocked. It was informal!—and not over clean.

We were not half through buttering sandwiches when our driver turned up and wanted to start. However, he was prevailed upon to wait ten minutes longer.

Then feeling somewhat inadequately fed we got into the automobile once more and started over the last part of our trip.

CHAPTER II

A CABIN IN THE ROCKIES

THE rough road wound around the mountain as best it could, now taking a dip of death into the valley, now struggling up a stony ascent that seemed impossible to anything but a burro. Our driver asked us if we were afraid of hills. "The last ladies I took up screamed and cried," he remarked.

Up and up we went. It was a long time since we had arisen that morning at five o'clock. We met a small band of wandering horses whose leader had a cow-bell about its neck. They had been turned loose to find good pasture. This also was informal. Finally we reached a wire gate.

"This is the beginning of Ransome's property," said the driver. At the same moment the engine stalled and the car refused to move. I had been expecting it all along. It was almost a relief to have it occur. While our chauffeur examined into the possible causes, Mary espied a solitary horseman riding among the pine trees a little way off. He wore a sombrero and apparently all the rest of the costume that appertained to the cow puncher.

"It's Daddy!" cried Mary.

"It is sure enough," we all echoed. Our driver gave a shrill cowboy call which immediately attracted the rider's attention.

The next moment the Doctor had joined us and the children were clambering up his horse to get the first kiss.

"Well, I surely did not expect you so soon," he said. "I was just riding over to finish a small job. Isn't this great country? Just wait till you see our cabin."

"Is that our horse?" cried Dave and Trixy.

"Yes, that is Jim Snort. Jim Snort, Dave."

"Why Jim Snort?" asked Dave.

"Well, his master, who is a real Indian, said he ought to have a last name, and as he snorts a lot, that seemed a good one."

"I want him," called Trixy.

"Let me ride him up," said Dave.

"All right, jump on," his father answered. So Dave was hoisted up into the big Mexican saddle. The car was now repaired and started up the final hill, with the Doctor standing on the running board.

"Why Daddy, you've grown a moustache! And your nose is peeling. You're as brown as an Indian."

"Maybe I'm turning into one," he laughed. "But look, look around. Isn't this wonderful?"

We turned. Far, far off were the blue mountains. Then queer mound-shaped hills that rose straight out of the gray-green plateaus. Then, seemingly quite near, the cañon of the Rio Grande. This was what we were to feast our eyes upon all summer.

We were passing an adobe house in the clearing.
"That is Mr. Ransome's house. Ours is above."

A short, sharp climb and we stopped at last, under two towering Douglas firs that looked like redwoods. A little log cabin was nestled among the trees, with an orchard in front and a pasture stretching up in back.

"It's just perfect," said Mary.

The Doctor took us exploring,—showed us where the bees lived, where the horses were to be tethered or left to roam at will. The clear brook, rushing back of the cabin, was our reservoir straight from the mountain peaks which rose high above us. In the distance we could hear cow bells, cow bells and the rush of the stream and all the rest a friendly silence.

In the cabin we went to decide in solemn family conclave who was to sleep where and with whom. It was agreed that Dave should be provider of wood and builder of fires, also bringer of water. Mary was to help with the dishes, and the table. Also some housework fell to her lot. Trix was to be general helper and mother's assistant. Her special duty as ordered by the Doctor was to keep mother from working too hard, as ordered by the rest of the family, to keep Daddy from working at all. Dave was to go for the mail, Mary for the milk.

The first evening seemed a portentous time. Dave went with the good-natured Mexican farm helper to drive up the cows into the corral to be milked.

Trix followed, as she had a natural weakness for cows. Indeed these beasts were almost irresistible, they were so friendly; and the calves running beside them, so pretty. It was dark before Mary brought in the great can of warm, rich milk and Trixy had to go to bed. Suddenly we seemed very far away and she extremely small. When Dave's turn came, a certain reluctance was evident. Finally when he was undressed there was a call for mother.

"Do you suppose the Indians could really get here from the pueblo?" he whispered.

"But they are all peaceful, farming Indians."

"But there are lots of them. And, Mother, listen, what was that? What does a mountain lion sound like?"

Evidently the teasing remarks of the two Mexicans had taken effect. It was some time before Dave was sufficiently reassured to go to sleep. Finally Mary had to be persuaded to retire. It was not fear that caused her reluctance.

"I just can't go to bed when there is so much to see that's new," she said. "I'm thirteen, Mother. Can't I stay up a little later?"

At last all was quiet and the Doctor and I stood in front of the cabin door and looked up at the friendly, sparkling stars, so many more and so much nearer than at home. Only the rushing brook and the far-off cow bells to keep us company.

Dave had obtained permission to get up as early as he wished the next morning. The Doctor felt that in a few days his enthusiasm for early rising

would die down. But the first day the boy slipped out at five o'clock to help drive up the cows.

Trixy, too, was awake and stirring, much to Mary's disgust, whose room she shared.

In fact, the whole family arose almost with the sun. Soon a brisk fire was burning in the stove. Cereal, pan-cakes, bacon and cocoa were produced smoking hot, which the family were told must be eaten on one plate apiece to save dish-washing.

After breakfast the call came from Mary, "Dave, you have to carry out the milk and butter."

"Where to? I'd like to know. I thought I was to light fires and get firewood."

"Well, you have to put the things down in the brook to keep cool. You bring the water and so this fits in."

"I don't see it," said Dave. "Mother, do I have to?"

"I'll carry things to the cellar and help mother with the dishes. So it's only fair for you to carry out the things to the brook. Isn't it, mother?"

"That seems a right division," I replied.

"I'll help you, Dave; I'll carry the butter," said Trixy.

So Dave departed grumbling, with the big can of milk, to the icy brook which was reservoir and refrigerator at the same time.

When he came back he asked if I thought the butter was wrapped up enough. "You know, mother," he added, "butter collects germs very easily; my physiology book says so."

I told him I thought it was all perfectly hygienic.

Just after the dishes had been cleared away, Mr. Ransome and his two children, Edward and Winifred, arrived, Ted bearing a pail of foaming buttermilk and Mr. Ransome a pound of fresh butter. The Doctor introduced them and soon all were chatting together. Ted was about Mary's age, so the two immediately set to planning rides and good times together. Winifred, twenty-two and at Mills College, in California, asked if there were anything that she or her mother could do for the family comfort. She was assured that everything was just right; that every one had slept well, and that all were longing for the first horseback ride.

"Can't Mary come down to San Joachim with us this afternoon?" asked Winifred. "Ted and I are going for eggs."

"O, mother, may I?"

"Surely," was the reply. "It sounds fine."

"Dave was a great help driving the cows this morning," remarked Mr. Ransome. "I hope he'll help us at night, too."

"I know he'd like nothing better," I answered.

Presently our landlord and his children departed and the Doctor showed us the various landmarks of our domain, the currant bushes, the work-shed with its suggestive axe, the nails where the saddles were to hang, the cherry trees and the place where he was planning to build a shower bath with the aid of a piece of gutter piping.

Jim Snort and Nellie, the other horse, now ap-

peared and coming up to the back step knocked loudly with their hoofs.

"They want salt," said the Doctor. "Trixy, go get some."

Trixy, overjoyed, ran into the house and brought the salt bag. "Where shall I put it, Daddy?" she asked.

"Right in this box," said her father. "Then they can't scatter it." So Trixy did as she was bid and delightedly watched the two cow-ponies licking up the salt.

"O, Daddy, can't I ride?" she begged. So the Doctor put a bridle on Nellie and lifted Trixy up on her back.

The child was absolutely fearless. Holding the reins tight, she dug her heels into Nellie's side. "Get ap!" she shouted lustily, and trotted off through the orchard while the family watched.

"I want to ride, too," said Dave.

"Where do I come in?" said Mary in an injured tone.

"You are going this afternoon," replied the Doctor. "Dave, if you want to ride, try to bridle Jim Snort and help me with the saddle."

The boy was a bit awkward at first and Jim Snort pretended to object to the bridle. He had to be coaxed a little. He puffed himself out where the saddle was put on so that the girths would not be too tight.

"That's a trick you'll have to guard against," advised the Doctor. "Horses don't like to be



"GET AP" SHE SHOUTED LUSTILY.

squeezed at the waist." But presently Jim Snort was ready and Dave climbed up on to his back. By this time Trixy had returned and the two solemnly rode off together around the house. We could hear them quarreling as to which had the better horse.

"It's a perfect place for them, isn't it?" remarked the Doctor.

"I think it's perfect for all of us," I replied.

CHAPTER III

RATTLESNAKES PAST AND PRESENT

IT was a glorious morning. Far above the blue hills little fleecy clouds chased each other to be lost finally in the deep blue of the sky. The air was so clear that the deep cañon of the Rio Grande miles away, seemed only as far across as the next meadow. A table-shaped mountain known as a mesa, seventy miles away, could be seen distinctly.

The children had been left to do a little housework before the family started on an all-day picnic, while the Doctor and his wife had gone for the horses.

It may be said that Mary was the only one who was expected to accomplish much. Dave brought in some wood, however, while Trix pretended to pick up the things that lay scattered about the cabin. Mary, having decided that she could do much more than the other two, began busily sweeping. All at once, in the dim light of the curtained closet which she had started to clean, she saw something moving. Then she heard a curious sound, something like the big grasshoppers that fly through the air on hot summer days. She peered down and then sprang

back. "Dave, Trixy," she called in surprise and fear, "there's a rattlesnake in Mother's closet."

Instantly Dave dropped the stick of wood he had been carrying, while Trix let fall her pajamas and doll, and the two rushed into the room where Mary was. The curtain had been pulled back from the closet and there was a coiled snake whose little red tongue ran in and out venomously. The ominous warning rattle could be plainly heard.

"Run, Dave, run and tell Dad!" cried Mary.

Off sped Dave to the pasture where the horses were, calling loudly every other minute: "Dad, there's a rattler in the closet." Meanwhile the snake still remained coiled, and Mary, with Trix at her heels, watched it from a discreet distance.

"What if I had stepped on it in the closet?" the girl thought. "How long has it been there? Where did it come from?"

The time seemed endless before she heard the hurrying footsteps outside and her father's laughing voice calling, "Well, Mary, what yarn are you spinning? Where's the snake? Are you sure it's not a mouse or a boa constrictor?"

"You come and see," Mary answered indignantly.

No sooner had the doctor entered and seen than his face went a little white. He caught up a stout club that was standing in the corner and in an instant had smashed the snake's head. "You've had an adventure and a narrow escape, Mary," he said quietly.

"Why, I wasn't much scared," said Mary. "But can I have the skin and the rattles?"

"Indeed you can," answered her father, who sat down immediately and skinned the reptile, finding a newly-eaten mouse whole in its stomach.

"That was what brought him," remarked the Doctor, "and that's why he didn't act more quickly. It must have made him sluggish. But how he ever got the creature down whole passes my knowledge."

The children stood round watching curiously. "It's not a big snake, only two rattles and that means two years."

"How big have you seen them, Dad?" asked Dave.

"Well, I think the biggest I've seen would have been as long as I am, stretched out. He was an old chap with twelve rattles. That was down in old Mexico, when I was there as a boy. Maybe I'm exaggerating. This fellow is about as long as your forearm, Mary, and how he managed to get that mouse through his mouth is a miracle to me."

"How do you think he got in?" I asked.

"Why, there are holes through the floor here. I imagine we'll find many holes just outside the wooden walls. We'll fill them up—or rather I'll ask Mr. Ransome, our landlord, to fill them up in the surest way. Maybe he'll think we will want to leave."

"You wouldn't go for a little thing like that," said Mary scornfully.

"I wonder what a tenant in a Boston apartment would say if he found a snake in his closet?" I remarked.

The Doctor laughed. "I wonder. I think the

landlord would have to work hard to persuade him to stay. You may feel differently tonight, Mary, when you hear the wind between the wall paper and the house wall, or when a couple of chipmunks run across the air space above the room."

"Ugh!" said Trixy and ran out of the room.

"I wish I had my physiology book here. It tells all about cures for snake bites," remarked Dave. "I think I'll go down and tell the Ransomes."

So he went down to the ranch house and presently brought back Mr. Ransome and one of the Mexican helpers.

The rattlesnake was duly examined and wondered at. Pedro, the Mexican, told of killing a rattler in the lower pasture with eight rattles.

"But they seldom come up as far as this," said our landlord. "It has been very dry and perhaps that is the reason. I think it is eight years since we have seen one up here and then not in the house."

He and Pedro went around outside the cabin and found two or three holes where the snake might have entered. These, it is needless to say, were quickly filled in with adobe, or clay mud, by Pedro under Mr. Ransome's direction.

It was nearly lunch time now, so the picnic was put off to another day. The rattlesnake was considered enough excitement for the time being.

That afternoon, however, Dave and the Doctor went off on an exploring expedition to the small settlement called San Joachim, about two miles distant. Here lived the blacksmith, a white-haired, healthy

looking American, with his children and grandchildren, whose wooden house was a little apart from the adobe cabins of the Mexicans. He told the Doctor how he had come there long ago for his health and then had just stayed on. "I don't reckon we do much good, but then we never do any harm," he observed.

"You do lots of good making really honest shoes for the horses," said the Doctor.

"That's right; I don't know how the poor critters could get along without us."

There was one little winding road with the smooth-walled adobe houses on each side, almost like the walls of a French village. Horses and pigs and cows were penned in fenced yards called corrals, from which the smaller animals frequently escaped into the road. Of course every house owner had a rough, long-haired dog, who barked and yapped at the horses' hoofs, as the Doctor and Dave rode along. There was just one store which was opened by a young Mexican woman whenever anyone came by who seemed to want to purchase anything. The Doctor asked in his best Spanish for "dulce" but was told volubly something that seemed to mean that nothing sweet was to be purchased there. This was disappointing, but finally some crackers were bought for Dave, who was always hungry between meals. Then the Mexican carefully locked the shop and went about her business while the Doctor and Dave started for home again.

It was a long steep climb to the ranch and most

of the way had to be taken at a walk. Presently they were overtaken by two riders, one of whom was unmistakably an Indian boy. He had the dark eyes and straight black hair of his race. His shirt was worn with the tail over his trousers and a white cloth was fastened about his loins. The other, a bright-eyed, freckled-faced boy of fifteen, was just as unmistakably American. Fair haired, and a little inclined to be fat, he looked as though he might be a merry companion. This was Anthony Rogers, a cousin of the Ransomes, who lived with his parents and sisters in Taos.

"Well, Doc, how goes it?" he called out in greeting. "Is this a part of your family? You see, I have brought part of mine. Mateo, this is the doctor who sometimes cures us and sometimes kills us."

"You're a saucy boy," said the Doctor. "But I am glad to meet you," he added to the Indian lad, who acknowledged the greeting without a smile or change of feature.

"O, Dad, is he a real live Indian?" whispered Dave.

"Yes, he was brought up with Anthony."

Then the Doctor turned to the newcomers. "How long do you stay now, Anthony?" he asked.

"Mateo and I are up for the haying. We are going to help. That is, I am. I don't know whether Mateo will or not. But he can shoot a rabbit for you sometime, can't you, Mateo?" The Indian nodded, then the two rode on ahead, Anthony whooping loudly.

"He doesn't seem to talk much, Dad," remarked Dave.

"Haven't you read enough Indian stories to know that the valiant red man is always silent and self-contained?" asked his father.

"He might at least have said 'Ugh!' They always do."

"Perhaps he will tell you some Indian legends, if you get acquainted with him, Dave."

When they reached home Mary was told of the meeting with the Indian boy.

"O, I'd like to talk to him," she said. "Maybe he'd tell me all sorts of stories."

"It would be easier for you to tell him the stories yourself," said the Doctor. "But did you know that right near us, up in the pasture, there are a number of Indian mounds? Some have been dug into. In one they found pottery and a real skeleton. Perhaps we can dig up some interesting things in one of the others."

"O, Daddy, can't we today?" exclaimed Mary. "*Mañana*, tomorrow," answered her father. "Killing a rattler is enough excitement for one day."

"But please tell us something about the Indians around here," Mary asked.

"Well, wait till we've unsaddled the horses and put them to rights. Then come out under the trees and we'll have a lecture on Indians, by your honored father."

"I'll help," said Mary.

In a few minutes we had all gathered under the

great Douglas pine, tall, red-trunked, with gray-green spreading foliage.

"Now hearken, O my children," began the Doctor, "and I will tell you tales of my people—stories which my fathers' fathers have told as they sat at evening by the council fires."

"Now, Daddy," said Dave, "tell us nicely."

"He is. Do keep still, Dave," Mary spoke sharply.

"Keep still every one, or there won't be any more story," I said.

"Dave, how long ago did Columbus discover America?" asked the Doctor suddenly.

"I don't know, 1400 and something."

"I know; 1492," called Mary.

"Right. How long is that?"

"Well, about 500 years," said Dave slowly.

"Four hundred years before Columbus discovered America the Pueblo Indians built houses here in New Mexico. That's a long time ago. They made pottery, beautiful dishes and bowls, they hunted with bows and arrows. Their houses had four and five stories and were made of adobe, that is, mud, Trixy, just like your mud pies."

"Really, Dad, could I make houses out of mud pies?"

"Well, the mud has to be mixed with straw. But for all that it is mud. It acts like thermos bottles, keeping you cool in summer and warm in winter.

"Their big houses or pueblos are like apartment houses. There is one in Taos that takes care of

five hundred Indians, who in summer farm around in little patches of irrigated land on the Taos plain. There is an old legend that they came from China originally; they speak of their ancestors crossing the great sea in the far days of the past.

"The Pueblo Indians are a peaceful race and farmers—tillers of the soil, builders and makers of pottery. A good many hundreds of years ago the Apaches came down, it is said, and destroyed the old pueblo, killed many of the men and settled down as conquerors, so that the present Taos Indians are part Apache. This they will not acknowledge. But they certainly have many traditions in common. And a number of dishes and odds and ends have been discovered to be the same here as among the Apaches.

"When the Spaniards came over and settled they had many struggles with the wild tribes but usually the Pueblo Indians were friendly. Indeed the Pueblos gave the white newcomers grants of land in return for protection from the Apaches and Comanches that used to come down like a wolf on the fold. Back of our cabin, up in the old pasture, are a number of Indian mounds which may have been isolated adobe cabins or may have been burying mounds. A number of pieces of pottery have been dug up here and the skeleton of a man.

"There are two or three mounds which haven't been dug into yet. I think it would be fine to dig there ourselves. Over back of Taos in the mountains is a cave of some sort which no white person is allowed to approach. There the Indians have

their most sacred ceremonies. For though the Indians are supposed to be Catholics, they have their own strange sun-worship also. Sentinels are posted on the mountains and no one has ever successfully passed them except one man who never came back."

"Did they shoot him, Dad?" asked Dave.

"*Quien sabe?* as our Spanish friends would say. He never came back to tell."

"There is another cave near the cañon we rode through when I came here. In front of it is a small waterfall and at a certain time of day the sun shining through the water casts a prismatic light on the back of the cave. There once stood an altar, it is said. Certainly there are strange pictures rudely scratched on the walls even now. The Indians will not go near it and they say it is haunted by evil spirits. Trixy, what is it?" For Trixy had been trying for some moments to attract the Doctor's attention.

"Dad, there's a chicken in the cherry tree. And what's 'primsatics'?"

"What's what?"

But Trixy refused to repeat the strange word and buried her face in her father's sleeve.

"I think she means prismatics," I suggested, long familiarity with Trixy having given me powers of divination.

"What's prismatics?" asked Dave. "I didn't know either."

"Different colors, like a rainbow. Don't you know

the prism with the primary colors, stupid?" asked Mary.

"Is that true, Dad?" said Dave.

"Yes, though I don't know why Mary shouldn't be more polite about it. Well, I think this is enough for today. Look, Trixy, there goes your chicken." With a carefully aimed stone the Doctor dislodged the offending fowl.

CHAPTER IV

THE INDIAN MOUND AND ITS TREASURE

THE next morning was cloudy.

"Come, Trixy," called the Doctor. "Come, Chicken Little. Come see; the sky is falling down."

Trixy ran out of the cabin; the tops of the mountains on either side were covered with clouds.

"O, I want to go nearer and see," cried Trixy.

"Well, suppose we all go up a little way and dig in the Indian mounds. This is a nice cool morning to dig, although a bit threatening for our picnic."

"Who wants to dig?" called Trixy. There was small response.

"I thought you wanted to go to the Indian mounds, Mary," called her father.

"All right, Dad, we'll come."

The next moment Mary and Dave appeared, slowly but surely. The pick-axe and shovel were next sent for and presently the four started off up the hill.

"Aren't you coming, Mother?" asked Dave.

"A little later," I answered. "I'll join you when the chores here are all done."

The Indian mounds were not far away and soon

the Doctor's pick was at work while Mary and Dave helped with shovel and sticks and hands. Trixy rushed from one to the other, showing them strange treasures which she was sure were arrow heads or pieces of pottery. Fragments of pottery they found in plenty. Dave discovered a broken arrow-head, Mary a larger bit of bowl, with markings on it.

Then the Doctor took the shovel and began digging. He was afraid the pick-axe might break some precious piece.

"I always think of Curdie, in 'The Princess and the Goblin,' when I see a pick-axe," said Mary. "Do you remember how he went after the Goblin's toes, singing his rhymes?"

The Doctor stopped for a moment to rest, and it was at that moment that I joined them with Anthony and Mateo who had come to the cabin a few minutes before.

"Have you seen how the valley looks in the misty noon light?" I asked.

The Doctor and I turned to look. Far across the gray-green plains, streaked with soft yellow, rose the buttes, like huge ant hills, and more distant yet the faint blue ranges.

"Dad, Dad, see what I've found," cried Mary.

She had been digging while we had been gazing and now showed us, in the palm of her hand, a ring roughly fashioned of silver, and containing a single green jewel.

"I wonder if it's Indian? It certainly is a treasure, Mary," said the Doctor joyfully.

"Let's ask Mateo," cried Mary. Mateo and Anthony came to her and she handed the ring to the Indian boy.

The lad almost dropped it in his haste to get rid of it. One look was enough. "It is bad magic. You should bury it," he said. "It will bring you evil."

"Won't you tell us about it, Mateo," said Mary.

But Mateo was obstinately silent as to his reasons. "Bury it deep, it is evil. It will bring great trouble," he said. "The evil spirits of the cave dwell in it."

"O, Mateo, what cave?"

But Mateo refused to speak again. Already he had been betrayed into saying more than he meant to. He turned and started down the hill, pursued by Mary and Dave, who plied him with questions.

"It's no use," said Anthony. "He won't talk unless he wants to."

The Doctor was examining the ring. "I wish I knew if it were Indian or Spanish. It must be quite old."

"It is, Doc," said Anthony. "I wish my father could see it. He knows a lot more about Indian things than I do. He has been down into their sacred kiva at the pueblo. But this is not Spanish. Apache, I should say. It looks strange to me. The stone is a pretty one. I don't know it. It does not come from this part of the country."

"If I had seen this in an antiquary's collection I should say that the stone was jade, and the ring Chinese," I remarked.

"You're right, it surely looks like it," said the Doctor in excitement. "Who knows what Mary may have landed upon? I am going to dig some more."

But the only other things discovered were more pieces of broken pottery.

Presently Mary and Dave returned in disgust. Mateo had refused to tell them anything.

" 'I go to shoot rabbit,' was all he would say," said Dave.

"That's good news. Then we will have fresh meat," said the Doctor.

Mary slipped the ring on her finger. "It's too big," she said.

"I wouldn't wear it, Mary," said Anthony. "It may have some Indian hoodoo about it. The Indians wouldn't like it if you do anyway. There might be an uprising. Would you let me take it to Taos to show it to my father? I am leaving this afternoon."

"Why, surely," answered the girl. "I'd love to know about it."

"Well, I can't promise. But he's been here so long and has studied the legends so thoroughly that he might throw some light on it."

"Do you really think there would be an uprising because of the ring?" asked Dave.

"Can't you take a joke, silly?" was Mary's answer. "You be careful of the ring, now, Anthony."

Anthony put it in his pocket in an envelope. "I'll sure look out for it," he said.

As we started down to the cabin together we heard shots.

"That must be Mateo after rabbits. I'm going down to see," cried Dave, who left on a run.

"I'll take good care of your ring," Anthony was saying, when there came a call for help from Dave.

"What are those boys up to?" said the Doctor. Then he and Anthony hurried along in answer to renewed shouts.

When we got down to the cabin the Doctor was carrying Mateo into the house.

"The boy has shot himself in a bad place," he said. "It's lucky I'm a doctor. Anthony has gone for old linen. Will you get some boiled water ready right away. Have you any sterilized bandages?"

I put some water on the stove to boil and then ran for the bandages. In a few minutes Anthony returned with Mrs. Ransome. We undressed the unconscious boy, while the Doctor brought out his instruments.

"I haven't anything but a local anaesthetic," he said. "But I can't wait to send to Taos. This bullet has got to come out right away. It's the only thing to do."

He turned to me. "Can you stand it? You will have to help."

"Of course," I answered, with some inward misgivings.

The water was boiling now and there was so much to do that I didn't have time to think. Mateo had regained consciousness by this time. The Doctor

took his hand and looked him straight in the eye.

"I've got to hurt you, my boy," he said. "But it's a question of life or death, I think, and I must get the bullet out. You will have to keep perfectly still."

Mateo nodded in his usual calm fashion, and the Doctor at once proceeded to the operation. Mateo was wonderful, and lived up to the finest tradition of the Indian race. I suppose it was five minutes, but it seemed to me an age before the bullet was extracted and the Doctor gave a sigh of relief. I had never seen him at work before. It was wonderful to watch his strong, quick fingers. I felt no faintness, only a tremendous interest.

When it was over, and Mateo properly bandaged and put to bed, we all sat down on the porch. Then the Doctor called Dave to the witness stand.

"How did this happen?" he asked sternly. "How could a boy shoot himself who was as familiar with a gun as this Indian boy?" Anthony was standing in the door listening, and ready to go back to his friend as soon as possible, while Mrs. Ransome, Mary and I sat waiting to hear the story.

"Well," began Dave. "I ran down to find Mateo and watch him shoot rabbits. He was after one fellow. I called to him not to shoot me. I guess it surprised him. Anyhow, he stumbled over something and the rabbit jumped out of a bush almost under his feet and he fell on the gun and it went off."

"Had he laid the gun down while he was chasing the rabbit?"

"I think he must have. Yes, I guess so. That's how he stumbled on it, I guess."

"I'm sure it wasn't Dave's fault," said Mrs. Ransome.

"I don't believe it was. But just the same, I want to find out and be sure there was no foolish business with guns."

"Indeed there wasn't, Dad. Is Mateo going to be all right?"

"I think so. But he has had a narrow escape."

Anthony went in the cabin, while Dave ran off, followed by Trixy.

"It's lucky you were here," observed Mrs. Ransome to the Doctor.

"It certainly is. I doubt if a doctor from outside could have reached here in time."

"When do you think he can be moved?"

"I am not sure. I never had an Indian patient. He may be running around day after tomorrow. How devoted Anthony is to him."

"Yes, they were brought up together. Anthony never had any brothers and always wanted one. His sisters weren't masculine enough for him. Mateo's father had worked for the Rogers and when the mother died, leaving Mateo a baby of three years, the Rogers took him home to play with Anthony. He has half lived there ever since, although he never ceases to love his own people and spend some time with them."

Anthony did not go home that day. Indeed, it was four days before Mateo was able to be up and

about. Evidently Anthony told his foster brother how narrow his escape had been, for the Indian boy was intensely grateful.

"I never forget," he said. "Whenever you want anything, you ask Mateo."

He had been a perfect invalid, so patient, and helping all he could. He never winced when his wound had to be dressed, and we all hated to part with him. But finally he declared himself well and drove off in the car that Anthony had insisted on getting for him at Taos.

In the haste of departure Mary almost forgot to speak of the ring. But Anthony whispered to her that he had it safe just before the auto started.

It was a gray day, with threatening clouds and occasional rain drops. So we all went into the cabin and lighted a fire. Then while some of us popped corn, the Doctor told the children some stories of New Mexican history.

"I don't want you to think of New Mexico as if it were all like the country around here," he began. "This is Rocky Mountain country, with a few 'mesas' or table mountains and a few lower buttes in the distance. On our way home by Santa Fé you will see something quite different. Barren lands, mighty cañons without vegetation, great plains of cactus and sage brush. You get some idea of it on the drive from here to Taos, but only a glimpse. That southern part was what the Spaniards discovered in the sixteenth century, after they had settled South America,—when old Mexico had be-

come a province of Spain. The wonderful, heroic Spanish missionaries penetrated into the Indian pueblos, lived sometimes alone with their savage flock and were frequently murdered by them. Santa Fé was settled by the Spaniards about 1605.

“But it was in the middle of the sixteenth century that Mendoza, first viceroy of New Spain, heard of a wonderful land of gold, the grand Quivira, and he sent out Coronado, the brave adventurer, with an expedition of daredevils to find the place. ‘Find it and settle down and don’t come back,’ were the orders. Coronado marched into New Mexico, but the fabled seven cities of gold turned out to be pueblo towns—wonderful enough but without the gold and most disappointing to the Spaniards. But they penetrated as far as Kansas. They were a recklessly brave band of explorers.

“After Santa Fé was founded the Spaniards occupied New Mexico in peace with only two serious Indian uprisings until the nineteenth century, when America took possession after the Mexican War.

“It was early in the nineteenth century that traders started to carry their wares across the mountains. The first trail led through Taos but after a while this was found too difficult and the trails east of the Rockies, coming up south of Santa Fé, were used more and more. There was always great excitement when the prairie schooners arrived with their loads of silks and furs and salt and ornaments.

“These adventurous traders certainly deserved all the fuss that was made over them when you think

of the dangers and exposures and fatigues of their long, long journey across country. The Spanish government made them pay well for their trading, too, and many of the first ones were imprisoned as supposed spies. I fancy a goodly ransom was what the Spaniards were after.

"The Indians who attacked the traders were never our friends, the Pueblos, but the wandering tribes of Apaches, or Comanches, or some other of those old brigands.

"It seems impossible that human beings could survive some of these adventures; and of course many a trader left his bones in the wilderness. I remember reading about two men who held at bay a whole band of savages who tried to burn them out by setting the prairie on fire. The men were rescued just in time by a caravan of traders. Even their mules were saved. I often wonder what these hardy old scouts thought of the Pueblo Indians; whether they classed them with their old enemies of the plains, or whether they just thought them part of the strange Spanish folk who bought their wares.

"The Indians have always been great weavers and makers of pottery. They had these industries long before the Spaniards came."

"Are they just the same now as they were then? Haven't they changed?" asked Mary.

"Who, the Pueblos? Well, I fancy they have changed a little, especially since our government has insisted on schools, which seems almost a pity. They knew a few things well in the old days and now

they half know a lot of things. It does seem strange though, to think of a Catholic priest starting these Indian feast days with the Mass and staying on to see the Indians finish off with their own strange ceremonies. Apparently they can worship in a great many ways. They pray to the sun and the rain and the harvest, very much as the old Greeks used to."

"You mean they still do it? Indians like Mateo who have grown up with Christians?" asked Mary.

"Surely. Mateo sees nothing strange in going to the Catholic church on Sunday, and bearing the name of a Catholic saint, and in the next breath attending a ceremonial dance dedicated to the sun god. I am glad that we are going to see more of these strange Indian towns and their legends. It is hard to remember that it is all part of 'Our United States'."

"It does seem so big, out here, Daddy," said Mary. "Somehow it makes me feel like waving the flag, just as I did during the war. It is so wonderful to think of all this beautiful country belonging with New England and the people back home."

"Did you ever think," said the Doctor, "how many of these little adobe houses, whose owners hardly speak English, had a star flag in their windows showing that a son or a husband had gone across the seas with the lads from New England? That surely should make our country united. Every family who sent a man 'over there' must feel a great kinship with all the others. 'No North, no East, no South, no West; one flag, one country for us all'."

"But when they talk Spanish, they don't seem like Americans," said Dave.

"You've hit the bull's eye, Dave," answered his father. "Teach every child to talk American and talk it correctly and pretty soon he'll think American."

"But why should we want to make them talk American?" asked Mary. "I like them better as they are. Isn't it kind of conceited in us to try to make them all like us?"

"Let me answer your question in the good old Yankee fashion, by asking another. Why do you think that thousands of men and women come over here every year from Asia and Europe?"

"Well, I don't know. Perhaps because there wasn't room for them at home."

"That's one reason. Do you know another, Dave?" Dave, who had been frantically waving his right hand, burst out with, "Because they think they can get lots more money here and maybe get to be President."

"Don't be an idiot, Dave," exclaimed Mary.

"Don't call names, Mary. Besides, Dave is more than three-quarters right. He says that every boy hopes some day to become President. And there's no reason why he shouldn't if he talks American and thinks American. I'll ask you another question, Mary. What does O-P-P-O-R-T-U-N-I-T-Y spell?"

"Say it slow, Dad."

"Opportunity. What does it mean? Somebody speak up! Don't be alarmed. Well, I think I re-

member that the dictionary called it a 'favorable chance.' The United States is the land of equal opportunity, where everyone has an equally favorable chance to make something of himself. That is what our fathers died for—that is what America means if it means anything. Can you imagine a little Italian boy or a Greek boy thinking he might be King of his country some time?"

"Well, I suppose not. But I can't imagine the policeman or motorman at home being President."

"Stranger things have happened. Think of Lincoln. Perhaps, too, our country is not keeping up to its ideals. It is for us who are of the old stock to live up to them. We want to teach these Mexicans and Germans and Italians and Czechs and all the rest the American language of the Constitution, the American speech of Abraham Lincoln. Before we teach them we've got to be sure that we know it ourselves. Is there any other great country, Mary, that can say it has never fought except for Liberty for itself or others?"

"But, Daddy, we haven't treated the Indians or negroes very well," said Mary, "and you said yourself that it would be a pity to change the Pueblos."

"I am afraid we cannot change these people. They have lived so long in one way, that they cannot live through a change. But we are realizing our duty to them more and more intelligently, I hope. Let us remember, Mary, that an American has two big watchwords. Equal Opportunity and Equal Obligation, which means duty. It is because so many

of us have forgotten the second watchword that we have failed toward the Indians and negroes."

There was a pause and Dave murmured softly, "Let us close by singing Hymn No. 9999."

"I think we will close by boxing your ears," remarked the Doctor. Dave jumped up and there was a race for the house and sanctuary.

CHAPTER V

THE INDIAN CAVE

I WANT my ring back—I don't see why Anthony doesn't bring it," said Mary, just as we were starting out on our long-deferred picnic. About a week had passed and no word had come from Anthony.

"I fancy he'll write, or his father will, soon," replied the Doctor.

Mary and Dave were on horseback, while the Doctor, Trixy and I were in the buckboard. It was to be ride and drive and change about. So we started while the valley lay in sunshine and only one of the distant mountains was topped with clouds.

The Indian cave was our destination. We hoped and we expected to buy our provisions at a small store in a little Mexican village on the way.

I do not like to drive down these precipices that are called "down hill," for working the brake is no easy matter. So the Doctor took the reins while Trixy snuggled between us. She watched us tilting with fascinated eyes and would remark every once in a while, "That would be a bad place to fall down," or "I wouldn't like to tip over here, Mother."

Dave and Mary, taking short cuts over hills that seemed only suitable for mountain goats or burros, soon outdistanced us, but we caught glimpses of them, and at last they joined us, coming at a slide down a gravelly mountain. Presently we were at the bottom of the cañon, where rushed the beautiful Hondo, which we forded. The water came almost up to the bottom of the wagon and the horses found some difficulty in keeping their foothold on the slippery, sliding stones. Trix did not like it and decided that she would ride home on horseback over that stream.

"Which would be better, Dad?" she asked. "To ride in water or drive?" It was a difficult question to solve.

"I think both would be easy here," said the Doctor. "This isn't bad, Trix."

The Doctor had halted the horses. "Look up the river," he said. A short distance away loomed a great wild gateway of rocky hills through which the water rushed. Just above were some ruins. "I wonder what happened there," remarked the Doctor.

"It's the proper place for a bloody deed," I said.

Looking down the river, the cañon seemed almost like the Grand Cañon of the Colorado, so covered with erosion and beautiful colors were the rocks. Up the steep bank ahead of us lay the Taos plains.

We drove along through pastures of irrigated lands, through waste lands, given over to prairie dogs, past Mexican and Indian adobe houses, and

corrals inhabited by dogs and very little children, until we reached the village where we were to buy our food.

While the Doctor and I were negotiating in the wooden shop which looked surprisingly like a New England country store, Trix and Mary went exploring among the smooth-walled adobe houses. Soon they had found seven little lambs, a family of rabbits, and a yard full of hens with one fierce turkey who gobbled at them, to their great delight. It was certainly a pretty sight to see Trixy and the lambs, who bleated and liked to have her scratch their heads.

Dave stood by as we bought the provisions. "Are you buying salt butter?" he asked.

"Yes, why?" asked the Doctor.

"Because my physiology book says salt butter keeps better," he answered.

The clouds were gathering over the mountains and in the cañons ahead of us when we finally started for the cave, armed with hope and equipped with more varieties of information than seemed possible.

Straight up the hill from the little village we went, the Doctor driving now, for the trail threatened to be a bad one, turning from time to time to look across the hazy plains to the far mountains, dimly blue in the distance. Just ahead was a great, bold, rocky-faced mountain that stood out against the forest-covered slopes at either side. Between this mountain and the next was the cañon into which the trail led. We passed two or three isolated adobe

houses, some sheep bleated from a corral, a small boy driving cattle met us and a dog ran out of a thicket to bark. Then the village was gone and the brush which almost swallowed the wagon tracks was about us. Mary and Dave scouted ahead on their horses and assured us that the trail was possible. The wagon tilted from side to side, and finally the horses came to a standstill at the foot of a narrow path that seemed to crawl up a perpendicular slope.

"Ride ahead, Mary," said the Doctor. "See what the path does farther up."

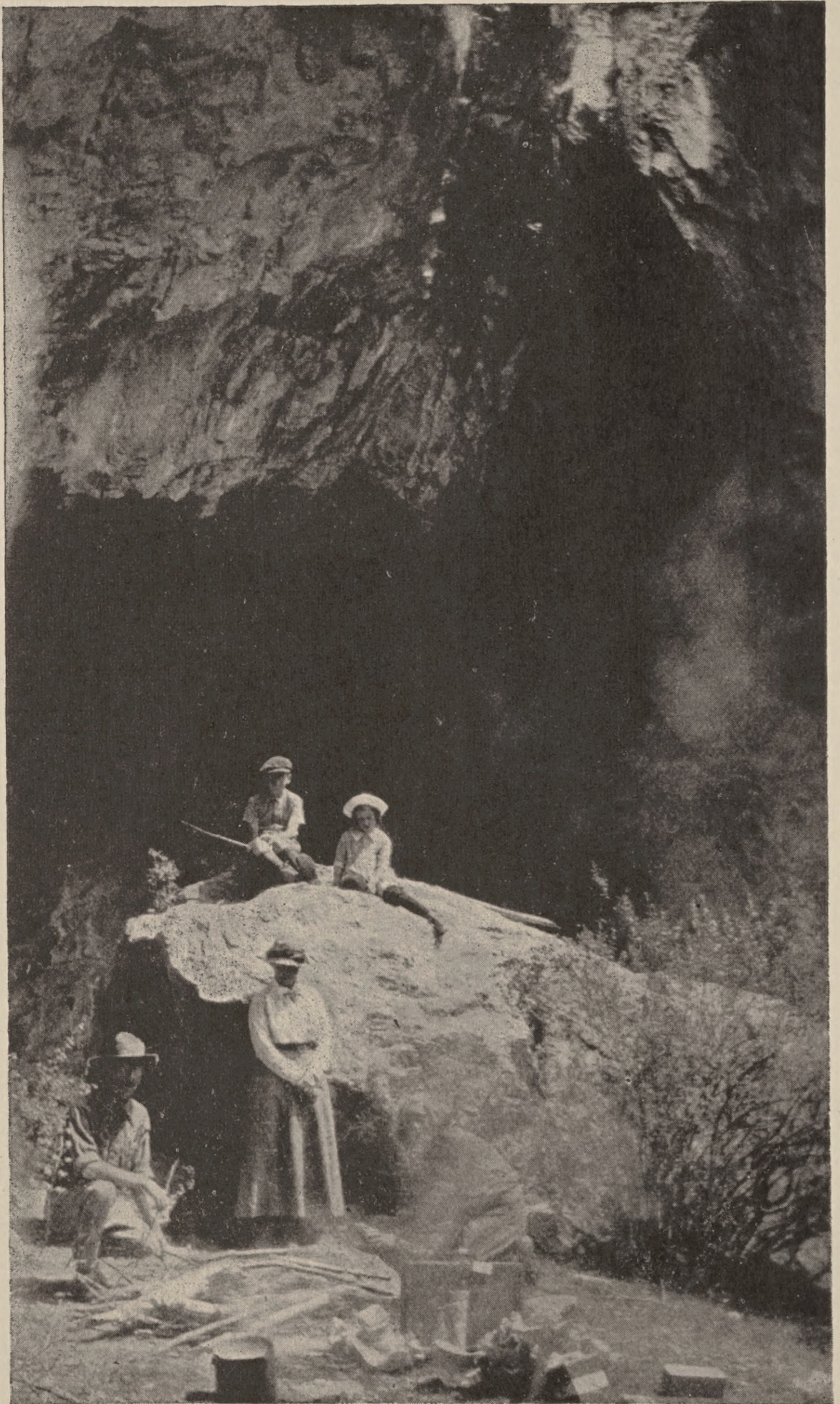
So Mary pushed Jim Snort up the hill and disappeared among the trees and underbrush.

"Here is the stream at our right. We can't be far out of the way," I remarked. The rushing little brook must be coming from the waterfall, I thought. Then we heard a call from Mary and she reappeared.

"You can't drive up, I don't believe, but it's here," she said. "O, it's wonderful!"

"I'll tie the horses, then," said the Doctor. "They can live on scrub-oak for a few hours. If the clouds don't belie themselves, there'll be plenty of water before long," he added. Up the cañon and over the mountains hung heavy gray clouds and an ominous mutter of thunder came from somewhere. But thunderstorms are rapid and every-day occurrences in this part of the country and no one heeds them.

So the horses were pastured and we proceeded up the steep incline, hearing louder and louder the sound of the stream. Then suddenly we came upon



THE CAVE WAS FULL OF ECHOES AND LIGHTS.

the falls—a thin stream, fifty feet or more in height, glistening in the sunlight and shining like silver, with the black mouth of the cave for a background. Round the falls led the path, and we followed Mary and Dave, who had gone on ahead of us.

The cave itself was large, how large we could not see at once, for it was dark except for the light that shone and flickered through the falls in iridescent color on a single area at the back. It was enormously high, and damp. I could feel the chill of the tomb about me.

"I don't wonder the Indians regard it with fear and trembling," remarked the Doctor. "Half an hour's stay here would give any one the worst attack of rheumatism imaginable."

There were markings on the wall, but nothing that seemed to mean anything. Mary and Dave were examining every stone and crevice with the painstaking thoroughness of a detective.

"I think I'll go out in the sun," I said, and Trixy followed me. She was silent for once. The Doctor came too. There came a call from Mary.

"Dad, Mother, I've found something. A stone that will move. Right here where the light shines." Then a cry of surprise and delight. "There's a long hole here, and, Dad, I've found another ring!"

At that moment the light seemed to be extinguished and a deeper, nearer rumble of thunder made us jump. Mary and Dave came tumbling out half frightened, for the sound echoed and rever-

berated through the cave. Some drops of rain were beginning to fall.

The Doctor examined Mary's new treasure. "If it wasn't for the fact that Anthony has your ring in Taos, I should say that you had found this before. It certainly looks just like it, only cleaned up a bit."

For the ring which the Doctor held was of polished silver with the jade showing plainly. Also we could now see certain odd characters worked into the silver, unmistakably Chinese.

"This is most mysterious, Mary. You seem to find rings like a divining rod. But we've got to get under cover. This storm is a big one." The rain was turning into hail which rattled around us, and the lightning flashes broke the dark gloom of the clouds which enveloped us. We hardly dared to stay in the damp cold cave, but after all it was not so wet as outside.

Mary and Dave collected what sticks they could find and presently the Doctor had a fire glowing in friendly fashion. The provision basket was produced. The smoking bacon and fried eggs immediately removed some of the eeriness of the place. Outside the wind blew and the rain and hail fell. The cave was full of echoes and lights that quivered amid the shadows.

We were all glad when the storm ended and the sun suddenly brightened everything. Back we started. Mary, with her ring tied about her neck, drove in the buckboard with Trixy and myself, while

Dave and his father rode ahead. I wrapped my sweater around Trixy, who was cold. Indeed, the sun could have been much warmer and still not have been too warm.

It seemed a long road home. Over the plains the winds blew, and the sun was unexpectedly low in the heavens. Trixy begged to be allowed to ride but we told her that she must wait till nearer home. Down in the Hondo Cañon it was full of shadows, and the strange ruins stood out more sinister than ever against the rocks. Then came the long, uphill climb.

"Can't I ride now?" begged Trixy. So finally the Doctor took pity and got off Nellie. He lifted Trixy up on the horse and sat down in the back of the wagon.

Dave was far ahead and we could not see him in the dusk. As for Trixy, her straight little figure trotted behind us, a dark bobbing shadow against the sky.

"Are you tired?" called the Doctor presently.

"Why do you ask?" she called in answer.

"Because if you are, you can get off the horse and ride in the wagon."

"I don't want to get off," was the prompt reply.

So we finally came to the ranch house as the darkness shut down in earnest. Dave had already arrived and the Ransomes were out on the porch to welcome us. Anthony was with them, and a tall, fine looking man who was his father.

"Have you got my ring, Anthony?" called Mary eagerly.

"It was the ring that brought us up here," Mr. Rogers answered. "It is a great treasure, and it is lost. I don't know that we are to blame. But I felt that I must come to tell you. I had examined it carefully and then had put it in my strong box for safe-keeping. The next morning it was gone. We have looked everywhere and questioned every one."

The Doctor suddenly said: "Would you surely know it again? and did you polish it before you examined it?"

"Yes to both questions," answered Mr. Rogers, unhesitatingly.

At once I thought of the shiny silver ring Mary had found that day.

"Show Mr. Rogers your ring, Mary," said her father in a curious voice.

Mary instantly unfastened the string and produced the ring.

Some one struck a match.

There was a moment's silence, then: "It's the same ring," said Mr. Rogers simply; "Where did you get it?"

"In the Indian cave back of Seco," answered Mary, her voice trembling with excitement.

"It's too long and complicated to discuss now," I said. "We must go home with the children. Can't you come up to the cabin after supper and tell us about it?"

"I certainly will come, for I want to hear as well as tell," was the answer.

So we drove away in the darkness and I felt as though all the mysteries of the East and West had descended upon us in a heavy cloud. I was glad when the lamps were lighted in the cabin and the fire was burning in the stove and the smell of modern prosaic kerosene filled the air.

CHAPTER VI

THE RING IS SENT AWAY

WHEN Trix was in bed and the supper dishes cleared away, the Doctor lighted a roaring wood fire on the hearth.

Then Anthony, Mr. Rogers, Winifred and Ted Ransome came in. We gathered around the fire, while Mr. Rogers, full of eagerness, questioned us as to the finding of the ring.

Mary answered; told how she had found it in the mound in the first place, how she had entrusted it to Anthony after Mateo's departure, and then how she had discovered the secret place in the cave.

"It sounds like magic," said the older man slowly. "But I fancy Mateo had something to do with it. The ring is undoubtedly very ancient. The stone is jade, which of course, is not found here. I think we must say that it is Chinese, although some of the markings are quite Indian. I would give a good deal to know the history of it. Many people claim that these Indians here were originally Chinese. This ring may be an added proof of it. It may mean some form of ancestor worship, which took place in the cave. I think Mateo unquestionably

associates the two together—I mean, the ring and the cave.”

The ring was passed from hand to hand carefully. It was simple in workmanship but the jade was handsome, very light in color. It seemed to be roughly of the shape of a grotesque animal.

“Are you going to wear it?” asked Ted.

“I wouldn’t advise it. Not in these parts, anyway,” said Mr. Rogers. “Mateo, and perhaps the other Indians, do not relish seeing it in your possession, Mary.”

“Safes don’t seem strong enough to hold it, so maybe Mary wouldn’t be,” laughed Dave.

“Do you think your father would keep it in his safe for us, Winifred?” asked the Doctor.

“I guess so. I wonder if they will know it is here, the Indians I mean.”

“If I were you, I’d send it by registered mail to my bank in Boston,” remarked Mr. Rogers, thoughtfully. “It’s valuable at home as an antique and apparently it’s wanted here also, by others beside ourselves.”

“We’ll think about it. At any rate, Mary will not wear it while we are in this part of the country,” replied the Doctor. “You have lived here in New Mexico for a long time, Mr. Rogers. What do you think of this cave?”

“Well, till now I should have said that it was a cave that the Indians regarded with superstition but which I considered to hold nothing worse nowadays than rheumatism. But if the Indians consider

that this ring belongs to them and it, apparently it means more. I shall have to stir up some of the old fellows and perhaps I can find out something. A Chinese witch ring in an Indian cave is sufficiently interesting in itself. I wish I knew more about it. You must consult Bixby; he is the great Indian authority. And really, let me warn you. Don't let that little girl of yours carry it around." With this parting word, Mr. Rogers and Anthony got up and said good-night.

The next morning they returned to Taos and Mary and her father went down to the Ransomes' with the ring. Mr. Ransome appeared a little doubtful as to the safe-keeping of the mysterious treasure. He considered Mr. Rogers' advice good, namely, to send the ring by registered mail back to the East.

"But I can't register it here," said the Doctor. "I would have to take it to Seco at least, or Quanta."

"I would advise it," observed Mr. Ransome.

"Well, I'll go over tomorrow with it," remarked the Doctor finally. "I ought not to ask you to keep it for me, if it's likely to make trouble."

"I'll keep it in the safe till tomorrow," said Mr. Ransome.

Late that afternoon Mary and Dave went down for the mail as was their custom. As they came near the house they saw a cavalcade of riders approaching along the old trail that led from Taos to the north. This crossed the road from the cabin not far away from the ranch house.

"Mary, it's Indians," cried Dave. Sure enough there were at least a score of Indians dressed roughly and blanketed, but not in war paint, as Dave remarked. They waved their hands to the children, who waved back.

The Ransomes were out watching the little party. "Where are they going?" asked Dave.

"Hunting—they go north to hunt deer and sometimes a yearling falls to their guns. That's why I don't care to see them go by. They are so carefully protected by Uncle Sam that they are as irresponsible as children and almost impossible to bring to justice."

"I am glad I saw them," said Dave. "Is the mail here, Mr. Ransome?"

"There is nothing for you but bread from Quanta."

"Hurrah, bread! We were all out of it," cried Mary. "Is my ring all safe?"

"I am sure of it; but I shall be glad to have your father take it tomorrow."

Ted and Winifred walked back with the children. The Doctor, Trixy and I went down to the big swinging gate to meet them some time before they were in sight. It was a glorious afternoon. The mountains back of us stood out against the cloud-flecked blue sky—there were always clouds somewhere. These were of the piled-up silver variety. As we came to the gate a fine looking, gray haired man rode up on a white horse. He was in the uniform of a ranger. "That's Jim Esty, the forest

ranger, that Mr. Ransome thinks so much of," remarked the Doctor. "I met him at Taos before you came."

"He looks nice," I answered. Then the Doctor introduced him. At that moment Ted and Winifred and our two children appeared. They all greeted the ranger with enthusiasm.

"What brings you here, Mr. Esty?" asked Ted.

"O, a number of things. I'm looking for a bite to eat for one thing."

"Surely, you'll spend the night with us," said Ted.

"If I am invited, I think I'll have to."

The three went off together down the hill. Dave looked after them enviously.

"Isn't that horse a beaut?" he said. "I'd like to be him."

"The horse?" asked the Doctor.

"No, the man."

"He is a very good friend of the Ransomes," said Mary eagerly. "He always calls Winifred his baby, to tease her. He tells the most wonderful stories. You see he was here in the old days of Indian fights and things."

"What things?" asked Dave.

"O, don't be silly. You know what I mean."

"No, I don't. What things?" persisted Dave.

"Shoes and ships and sealing wax," quoted his father.

"Dave, will you ride with me to Quanta to mail Mary's ring?"

"Why can't I go?" asked Mary, while Dave

answered enthusiastically: "You've said something."

"Have I?" remarked the Doctor mildly. "That's more than I can say for some folks. Will you go?"

"You bet," was the reply, while Mary asked again: "Why can't I go? It's my ring."

"That's enough glory, I think," said her father quietly.

The next morning early the Doctor, Mary and Dave went down to the Ransomes for the ring. Dave and his father rode on horseback and Mary ran along to say goodbye to her treasure. The doctor wrapped it up carefully in a little box and tied it as professionally as he would a broken arm. Presently they were off, with a wave from the Doctor's hand and a cowboy call from Dave.

"I am glad the ring is gone," remarked Mr. Ransome.

CHAPTER VII

THE KILLING OF THE STEER

MEANWHILE Mary and Winifred had gone into the house. The older girl was dressed in a picturesque riding costume, a fringed Indian hunting shirt lending charm to her slight figure.

"Will you ride up the cañon with me today, Mary?" asked Winifred.

"Surely, if mother'll let me. I know she will. O, but both the horses are in use."

"You can borrow one of ours. I'll bring him up. I want to start early, at eleven. We can take some sandwiches."

"All right. That would be wonderful."

Without waiting for any more conversation Mary ran up to the cabin. She speedily obtained the desired permission, after assuring me that the invitation had come from Winifred. At the stroke of eleven, Winifred appeared, looking more charming than ever, with her dark eyes and white skin shaded by a military hat. She was leading a brown horse that I knew to be gentle. Mary was ready with her lunch in a small knapsack.

So they rode off and I watched them go with pride, for they both sat as straight as arrows.

It was a wild rough trail up the cañon after the first pasture and pine woodland was passed. The stream rushed down a rocky bed and the path crossed and recrossed at every possible angle. In places the rolling stones seemed to make horse travel impossible and at other times the wet soil almost forced a stumble or a fall. But they rode slowly and steadily upward, past the great precipitous rocks known as the fireplace, through the wire gate which divided the lower and upper cañon, and presently came to the beautiful stretch of young aspens. The tall, slim, olive-green trunks and the fresh delicate foliage were like woodland nymphs holding a sprightly carnival upon the hillside. Mary had never been so far up the cañon before.

"Where are we going?" she asked. "When shall we eat our sandwiches?"

"We might do that now," said Winifred. "We'll be out of the woods presently and it's pleasanter to eat here in the shade."

So they got off their horses and rested beside the rushing stream and ate their lunch.

Winifred seemed a little nervous. She appeared to be on the watch for something or somebody. At last Mary noticed it and became uneasy. "Did you see anything?" she asked. "Is there any danger of rattlers or mountain lions?"

"What do you mean?—of course not," said Winifred laughing. "Let's go on."

They mounted their horses and in a few minutes left the aspens and came out on the mountain pas-

ture land where the Ransomes' cattle roamed and grew fat. Mary felt a little relief at the wider outlook. She also liked the late wild strawberries which grew on the steep mountain side among the wild flowers. Still they went up.

Presently a grove of pines sprang up on their right and they caught glimpses of a cow or two. Then from somewhere in the pines a horse whinnied. Winifred's horse answered. Then a man walked out from the shade of the trees. It was Jim Esty. He waved to them to join him.

"Let's not go any farther," said Winifred. Mary instantly jumped off her horse. Jim Esty came up to them. "What on earth are you doing way up here?" he asked.

"O, we thought we'd take a ride and look at the stock," said Winifred easily.

"They're all in there but those two yearlings your father spoke of last night," said Esty. "I've been hunting around for them but they seem to have strayed. It's hot here. Come into the shade."

The three strolled slowly over to the pines and sat down, after tethering the horses. Presently Mary began to hunt for strawberries. She stood for a moment at the edge of the wood looking across the pasture-land to the trees beyond. As she looked she saw away off a red moving object which she thought might be one of the yearlings. She called out to the ranger, who immediately jumped and joined her. Suddenly as she looked

the creature seemed to fall. It half rose and fell again.

"Come here, Winifred," called Mary. "I think there's something queer the matter."

Esty had field glasses and with them he looked over to where Mary pointed. "It's a steer, sure enough, and it's down as though hurt. By thunder, what's that?"

Mary strained her eyes and seemed to see a crouching figure approach the fallen animal.

"What is it, Mr. Esty?" asked Winifred, who had joined them.

"Indian!" was the brief response. "Keep still!"

"He can't hear us," said Winifred.

"There may be others. I had an idea they might be after those yearlings." He spoke in a whisper.

"What will you do?" asked Winifred.

"Go after him—you girls ought not to be here. I bet you thought there'd be trouble and that brought you, Winifred. You always are up to some mischief. But I don't dare start you home. Here, take my pistol—you know how to shoot, and stay by the horses. I don't believe he'll show any fight. Indeed, I'm afraid I won't get a sight of him. But I may."

"Is there any danger, Mr. Esty?" asked Winifred sharply.

"Now, don't be scared, kid." He laughed lightly. Mary was waiting impatiently for him to go. He went quickly, leaving his glasses with Winifred. He did not cross the open but vanished among the trees.

"There's another Indian there. They are skinning the steer," said Winifred suddenly. "The brutes! I hope Jim Esty catches them good and plenty."

"May I look?" asked Mary finally.

"Why, of course. Excuse me," said the older girl, as she handed the glasses to her.

Mary looked eagerly and made out the steer on the ground and the two Indians busily at work. It was very still. The only sound was made by the horses as they moved about occasionally to the end of the rope. Then a mountain jay screeched somewhere, startling the two girls as they took turns at looking through the glasses.

Over on the hillside there was no change. The two men continued to work on the fallen steer. Then suddenly as Mary looked she saw the Indians turn, half rise, and throw up their hands.

"Winifred, he's got them," she cried in excitement. "Here, take the glasses." There was a distant report of a gun fired. "Is it Mr. Esty or the Indians?" asked Mary, quivering with excitement.

"It must be Esty—the Indians are still holding up their hands," answered Winifred.

"But what will he do with them?"

"I don't know as he can do anything. I wish he'd shot 'em for the rascals they are. But the Government protects them and they know they are safe. He'll warn them probably. See, they are rising to their feet."

"Won't they try to do something to him in revenge?" asked Mary.

"Don't be silly. Of course not. They'll be glad enough to get away. Look, they've left the steer and are going. He'll be back soon. O, Mary, I'm so glad!"

"They might have shot him. I think he's awfully brave," said Mary.

"Well, if that isn't the coolest! Just like Jim Esty," remarked Winifred suddenly.

"What is?"

"I believe he'll bring back a fine steak from that steer for father. He's working over it. Now he's stopped. He's coming back." She sat down with a sort of gasp of relief, handing the glasses to Mary. But there was nothing more to be seen and after some time Jim Esty joined them, carrying a good sized piece of beef.

"Well, they didn't show fight nor fear, the nervy rascals. How I did itch to put a shot in them, instead of just scaring them. Did you hear my shot?" he asked. "There's a fine roast for you all, Winifred."

"I knew you were getting one. Why didn't you bring back the whole thing while you were about it?" she enquired laughing.

"I guess you'd better send some one else for the rest," he grinned. "It's time we started down if we want to get home before dark. I'd rather fancy it, myself."

The two girls quickly mounted and Jim followed. "You ride first, Winifred," he said. "Mary, you next, and I'll bring up the rear."

So they started and in a few minutes entered the aspens. It seemed sombre and dusky in the grove. Mary found it difficult to keep her eyes on the path and on her horse's feet. She kept looking into the depths of the woods. She tried to talk to Jim Esty or Winifred. But no one seemed conversationally inclined and presently they rode in silence.

The horses' hoofs on the stony places and the creaking of the leather saddles were the only sounds to be heard. The wood nymphs of noon had turned into sinister spirits in Mary's eyes. Every green tree-trunk might conceal a dusky, hostile form. The fact that Esty turned occasionally to scan the forest and the back trail and that Winifred seemed uneasy did not add to her peace of mind.

At last the aspens were left behind and they came to the high pines and rocks. It was getting dark, but Esty was plainly relieved when they passed the wire gate and were down in the lower cañon. He called out: "What's the trouble, Winifred? You're as silent as the grave."

"You weren't especially talkative yourself," answered the girl.

"It's a long, long trail," he laughed. Then he broke into song. Mary joined in half under her breath. She loved to hear him and her heart thrilled as she pictured the ranger riding along through the forests, braving danger of all sorts in the course of duty.

CHAPTER VIII

WAITING FOR NEWS

TRIXY and I had been alone all day, as far as human companionship was concerned. But we had four-footed and two-footed friends a-plenty. The chickens persistently stalked about the back porch or flew into the low cherry trees, whence they had to be dislodged by sticks and stones. There was one dignified rooster in particular who seemed to rise straight up in the air and attain one cherry at a time with apparently no effort, while the hens pressed about like fat old ladies with hooked noses. One hen was followed by two young turkeys who were motherless and announced the fact to the world by shrill peepings of despair and grief. I almost hated those young turkeys.

There were some new families of pigs, Trixy told me, so we wandered down through the orchard late in the morning and found a whole regiment of pigs, big and little, in the lower pasture. They seemed wonderfully happy and full of well-being. Trixy called "Pig, pig, pig." Immediately mothers and babies, brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts rushed up, grunting in joyful anticipation. I was able to

put my hands over the wires and grasp a young, very young piglet. He immediately set up a series of unearthly squeaks. I felt like the Duchess in "Alice in Wonderland" and expected some one to sneeze or cry: "Speak kindly to your little boy and beat him when he sneezes."

The other pigs took to their heels and never was seen a more amusing sight than those scores of pink and black creatures darting about like puppies while the homely older generation grunted disgustedly. Trixy held the baby in her arms. Pink it was, with a broad band of black, and never have I seen a more active child! We were glad to let it go presently and watch it run frantically to join its mother and family.

After lunch we rested. I lay in the hammock and lazily watched dozens of tiny chipmunks, their rat tails standing straight up in the air, chase each other up and down the rail fence or timidly and curiously approach the tree under which I lay. I finally called Trixy to see two run up a cherry tree and nibble at the bright red fruit. Those poor cherries! They would certainly be gone before their rightful owners could get them ripe enough for human food. Two brilliant mountain jays and several robins were rivaling the hens in the pine trees nearby. Suddenly our pleasant, friendly scene was interrupted. Down swept a beautiful fierce brown creature, swooping like a war plane on a peaceful town. It was a great chicken hawk.

In a moment the birds had disappeared and the

hens fled to their house. The disappointed marauder floated away, after circling around a few moments to make sure that his prey had really escaped him.

Having finished our naps, so-called, we visited our borrowed dog, whom we had for safety's sake, and all loved for her friendly ways and great brown trustful eyes. She, too, had babies. Five little, dark brown bundles of soft fur squirmed in the back of the dog house, their eyes not yet open but their mouths never shut!

As a last diversion we went on our daily route to the mail box, half a mile down the hill. I was beginning to wonder when our two sets of travelers would return. Surely, Mary should be down from the cañon! Surely, the Doctor and Dave had had ample time to get back from Quanta!

We sat down on the porch of the big ranch house on our way. Mrs. Ransome did not seem disquieted. She assured me that Quanta was a long trip—that the trail up the cañon was hard going. "If they are all home at dark they will do well," she said.

It was beautiful and peaceful looking across the great plains below us. Here and there were distant pyramid-shaped mountains, isolated from each other, rising out of the sand and grass like huge ant-hills. Far off, as far off as the heavenly regions I sometimes felt, lay the blue mountains—complete repose, complete peace.

Presently we continued down to the post box.

"Why, there are no letters, mother," said Trixy, "except the ones we put in this morning."

"Everyone is late," I sighed, and sat down to wait.

Suddenly quick-eared Trixy called: "They are coming, mother. I hear horses."

In a moment I too heard them. But it was a riderless horse that passed us on a run. "Trixy, that wasn't one of our horses?" I asked with a sharp stab of fear in my heart.

"No, mother. I'm sure it wasn't. He was different. He didn't look like one of ours."

"Here they come, mother," called Trixy again. At that moment again came the sound of hurrying hoofs, and once more it was not the Doctor and Dave, nor the mail man. This time four Indians, their white sheet-like garments wrapped about them, passed at a gallop. I mentally pictured them waving their clubs and tomahawks and my ears rang with imaginary war whoops. I was glad we lived in peaceful times.

"Why do they wear sheets, mother?" asked Trixy.

"I don't know. It's a custom among the Pueblo Indians around here and I never heard of it elsewhere," I answered. I was beginning to feel impatient. The shadows were long and lay blue upon the hills—the sun was nearing the horizon in a glory of clear gold sky.

At last we dared wait no longer and I slowly and disappointedly climbed the hill toward the cabin. I stopped to tell the Ransomes that the mail had not come. Trixy interrupted to describe the rider-

less grey horse and the galloping Indians. I felt anxious, somehow, and they asked us to sit down and wait. But I knew that the child must have her supper, so we went on. Trixy chattered on about horses and Indians, asking me questions which I hardly heeded. I was really anxious and dreaded I knew not what.

A shrill whoopee from up beyond the corral brought me to the door, and glad I was to see Winifred and Mary and Mr. Esty appear down the trail. I went out to meet them at the gate and Trixy ran ahead to tell them of the Indians and the riderless horse.

"It may be the bunch who were after the yearling," said the ranger. "I wonder who fell off the horse."

"I am concerned about Dave and the Doctor," I said.

"Would you like me to ride a bit on the way and meet them?" asked the old ranger.

"I don't like to trouble you," I replied. "But it would be a satisfaction."

"I will then, with pleasure." So he rode off while Winifred stopped a moment to join Mary in an excited account of the afternoon's adventure.

CHAPTER IX

THE MAIL ROBBERY

IT was black night with a myriad stars blazing in the sky, and Trixy slept the sleep of the young and weary. Then the shrill signal "Whoopee" finally came up the trail. We heard the dogs barking at the ranch below and knew that the travelers were returning. Mary and I ran down to the gate. At last the Doctor and Dave came up, riding slowly, Dave's cry announcing their arrival.

I knew the minute I saw the Doctor's face that something had gone wrong. But he and Dave were both there, and apparently safe and sound, and so there should be no questions until supper had been eaten. Dave was full of something. Finally, as he filled his bowl for the third time with milk and cereal he burst out: "Mother, did you think it queer that there wasn't any mail this afternoon?"

"The mail man was certainly late. I don't know when he came," I answered.

"He didn't come at all," Dave fairly spluttered in his excitement. "He was attacked by Indians—and O, mother; O, Mary! they got the ring."

"What do you mean?" cried Mary. "Father, you tell me."

"Dave, you tell the story," said the Doctor.

"No, I can't. You tell it. You'll do it better."

"Well," began the Doctor, "we started bright and early, as you know, and got to Quanta without any trouble. When we registered our precious package we found that it would get off by an earlier train if it went from the other postoffice. So we decided to find the mail man and get him to take it back with him. He was just about to start, so we gave him the package. Then we ate our picnic lunch—"

"You've forgotten the Indians, Dad," broke in Dave. "There were several standing around, only we didn't think of it till afterwards."

"You're right. There were some men wrapped in blankets loafing round the store. But we did not pay any attention to them. I wish we had. We ate our picnic lunch and then started home. Presently we overtook the postman, who seemed rather glad of our company. So we trotted along with him, and Dave asked a great many questions—whether he had ever been held up—whether he always rode alone—whether he ever carried money and so forth. About this time Jim Snort picked up a stone, so Dave and I stopped to repair damages. The post boy rode ahead. It took a few minutes to fix Jim Snort. Then I discovered that my girth was loose and my stirrup had come unbuckled. Dave begged to ride on after the postman. I consented, thinking I would overtake them in a moment. But the straps were in such bad shape that it looked as though someone had tampered with them. It was quite a while before

everything was put to rights and I was blaming myself for not examining the saddle before leaving Quanta, when I heard the sound of shots fired on the road ahead. I was on Nellie in a moment and the poor old thing must have thought she had a Mexican on her from the way she was treated. I made the better speed as I heard another exchange of shots.

"I rode up just in time to see four Indians galloping off in the distance and to find the postman on the ground, while Dave and Jim Snort were somewhere in the bushes, having temporarily parted company. The mail man was hurt—shot through the side. The mail bags were on the ground, split open, the mail spread about and scattered. Having seen that Dave was unhurt, though a bit bruised, I turned to the wounded man. I worked over him for some time and got him into shape to talk and continue his journey for a while at least. He told me that the Indians had attacked him and had made off with one of the packages of registered mail. From his description I felt sure that it was Mary's ring. We had to proceed very slowly after this, for I walked beside Nellie, holding the wounded man on. That is all the story. But I am through with the ring, I tell you that."

"O, Dad, we must get it back," cried Mary.

"The man said that Dave behaved very well." The Doctor turned to me: "He didn't scream nor run away. Of course he couldn't do anything, but I was quite proud of the account of him."

"Where's the man now?" I asked, after I had

gone around the table and had duly squeezed Dave, who merely remarked gruffly: "O, mother!"

"He's down at the Ransomes, I think. I ought to go down to see him in the morning. I fixed him up for the night before we rode up. I wish to goodness I had been with him and had gotten a shot at those fellows!"

"I'm glad you weren't," I thought to myself.

At that moment we heard the click of the gate and Mary ran to the door to see who was coming. She came back and announced the ranger, with Ted and Winifred. Esty had come to get the Doctor's account of the mail robbery and shooting of the messenger. Had we seen the Indians? Would Dave know them again if he saw them? How I wished that I had had a better look at them as they galloped past. The Doctor had seen nothing but a cloud of dust, like sister Anne, while Dave and I could only give a description of white sheets and dusky faces, three brown ponies and one piebald. I am afraid as witnesses we were most unsatisfactory.

"You think they were after the ring?" asked Esty finally.

"I think they must have been," answered the Doctor. "They left all the rest of the registered mail. There were six packages—one with gold in it. The ring was the only thing taken. It's astonishing to me, the way those red rascals go after it. I thought a few minutes ago I was through with it—but I declare, I think I'll not rest till I get it back."

"They are queer people," remarked the ranger.

"I heard a story once from a dealer in Indian curios that might interest you. He was an elderly man, who spoke English partly with his hands and partly with a Mexican accent, but so that a fellow could understand it. I went into his shop to inquire if they had Indian dolls—for I was a tenderfoot in those days and didn't know the customs of the country. I was after a doll to send to a friend with a baby."

"'Dolls made by Indians? No, no, Señor. The Indians make dolls, but they never sell them. Never will you see a doll made by an Indian. Only once in the years that I have been selling have I been able to get an Indian doll. I was looking through the pueblo with a young boy to see what we could find that would be good to get—pick up, as you would say. Thees boy he see in a blanket all wrapped up, a doll. The Indian man he was away in the fields. The squaw she sell him. I had gone on. The boy he join me, carrying the doll so that all might see. "Are you mad?" I ask heem. "The last dealer who found a doll was nearly killed. Hide it." So we hide it till we come to our cabin. There, I put it in the corner with some harness and saddle-blankets thrown over it. That night when the men came from the fields, three visited us. But they found nothing. The next morning, I harness the horses to the wagon and I put the doll under the blankets. While I harness, four Indians come up quiet and one begins looking in the wagon. "What you want?" I ask him. "You know," he answer. He look some more.

"Why cannot I have the doll?" I ask, for I see it was no use to try to hide it. He answered, "White man have a doll, a squaw in his church—he worship that doll. Indian, he worship his doll." And that, Señor, is the only Indian doll I ever see.' "

The ranger paused and lighted his pipe.

"That's a remarkable story," said the Doctor. "Just the opposite from the Chinese ancestor worship but I suppose it's akin to it."

"O, Mr. Esty, won't you tell us another story," spoke up Dave. "Tell us about the old ruin on the Hondo."

"You mean the remains of the distillery by the ford? Sure, I'll tell you, unless you folks want to turn in."

"Not yet," cried the children.

So the ranger started:

THE STORY OF TURLEY'S MILL

"When New Mexico first came into our hands the natives weren't any too friendly. The Indians and Mexicans decided that they didn't like 'los Americanos' and set out to get rid of us. There was to be a general massacre, but that sort of petered out. Only at Santa Fé and Taos there was big trouble.

"Now you know where the road to Taos crosses the Hondo. Well, right near the ford you can still see the ruins of what was then the mill and distillery belonging to an American named Turley. Turley was a good sort, with a Mexican wife. He

calculated that as long as he'd always kept open house for the natives, they would let him alone. He had been warned of the trouble but didn't take much notice till one morning when one of his men who had been to Taos to sell some whiskey came dashing up with the news that the Indians were on the way. Then the man galloped off as fast as his horse would carry him. Turley even then wasn't as scared as he ought to have been. But his men made him close the gates and make some preparation for defence.

"Not long after, the rabble appeared and demanded that the house and all in it should surrender. They promised to save Turley but it was death to all the others. Naturally Turley, who was one hundred percent. American man, refused. He said if they wanted the house or the men, they could come and take 'em. Then the Indians and Mexicans got under cover of bushes and rocks and kept up a murderous fire on the building. The Americans were all good shots, however, and they had a supply of ammunition. At every crack of a rifle, an enemy fell. Night came, but the Indians and Mexicans kept up the attack. When the sun rose, it was discovered that they had broken into the stable, which was separated from the main house. They couldn't break through the adobe walls, so even then it wasn't serious for the white men. When they found this out the Indians decided to get back to the outside. This gave the Americans a fine chance and every time an Indian showed his face in the court, or so

much as a hand, pop went a gun and down went Mr. Indian.

"A number were thus accounted for. But instead of discouraging the attacking party, this only served to make them angry. They poured in such a volley that some of the Americans were killed. And they could ill be spared. During the afternoon the Mexicans set fire to the out-buildings and while the Americans were busy putting out the fire, the Indians charged the corral, and speared all the hogs and sheep.

"It began to look bad for the defenders. Their ammunition was failing and the number of the enemy increased. So the survivors held a council of war and it was decided that when night came on, it would be every man for himself and save himself where and when he could. A fellow named John Albert and another man made up their minds to try it at dusk. They rushed through the gate, firing off their rifles at the crowd of armed Mexicans, and hoped to escape in the confusion. Albert threw himself under a fence and from there saw his companion cut to pieces with knives by the Mexicans. Albert could hear his shrieks for mercy. He lay still under that fence till it fell black night and then climbed over the logs and escaped to the mountains. Turley himself climbed out of a back window after dark. He felt pretty bad leaving everything behind, including the bodies of his wife and two children who had perished during the day. He got into the brush back of the house, found he was among a bunch of

Mexicans, but somehow managed to pass himself off as one of them and finally got off into the mountains.

“As he went up the Hondo Cañon, he met a Mexican friend on horseback. He offered the man a king’s ransom for his horse, but was refused. The Mexican had need of his own horse, it seemed. He told Turley to take refuge in the hills by Seco, where he would send him assistance. So Turley went up. But the Mexican used his horse to bad purpose. He rode to the mill, which was all aflame, and told the fiends there where Turley was hiding. So a bunch of them rode over and overtook Turley on the trail and knifed him in cold blood.

“Only two men escaped besides Albert, who carried the news to Santa Fé. Later Turley was avenged by soldiers at the Taos Pueblo. Those were bad times. You wouldn’t think it, seeing these gentle Mexicans around here, and hearing them talk so pleasant. The Indians, as you know, were fiends incarnate then. I tell you, when I ride round these woods and mountains now, and hear some strange noise in the twilight, I often think of those early settlers and travelers and what a noise in the dusk must have meant to them. You people have heard of Cody, Buffalo Bill they called him. And of course you’ve heard of Kit Carson. But there are others who made this part of the country and the old Santa Fé trail famous. At first, as you know, the traders came a-horseback with pack mules. Then with stage coaches. But it was always at peril of their lives.

Take the Red River Cañon up above here. The Indians attacked a stage there and killed all the passengers and left them lying by the trail. But they were discovered and Kit Carson guided troops four hundred miles in pursuit, till the band was discovered and the massacre avenged.

"When the Indians and Mexicans quieted down a bit there were always hold-up men. Right up in the mountains here was a fellow named Espanosa. He was a Mexican who had murdered his American guest and had then taken to the hills. He gathered about him a big crowd of cut-throats and made raids on farm and stage and kidnapped rich folks from neighboring ranches. At last an Irish trapper, Tom Tobin, went after him. Tom scouted round and one day found the bandit and one of his friends eating by a little fire in a cottonwood grove. There's a cottonwood tree just below Mr. Ransome's house—maybe that's the very one. Tobin wasn't running any risks, so he just took aim and shot his two men one after the other. He wanted the reward offered, so he cut off their heads and toted them up to old Fort Garland."

The ranger paused and relit his pipe. "I think I'd best be going," he said. "You have had a tiring day and I guess it's time to turn in. I've yarned enough for one night anyway."

We all demurred and he was not allowed to leave until he had promised to return another day and tell more stories.

CHAPTER X

MATEO SEEKS THE RING

A FEW days after, the Doctor decided to ride to Taos to consult with Mr. Rogers about the ring. Mary accompanied her father. They started early in the morning with a long list of commissions to fill in the town. "Think of us when you eat your 'nut sundae,' " were our parting words, as they cantered gaily off.

They followed the mail road which wound along the tableland and then for a second time down into the picturesque Hondo cañon. Here, close to the ford, where the stream runs between great cliffs, they studied curiously the ruins of Turley's mill of which the forest ranger had told us, with its history of massacre and betrayed trust. The Doctor yearned to pause awhile and fish for the speckled trout that make a ready response to the angler in the clear Hondo. Then up the steep sides of the cañon they rode, and along the edge until the road turned abruptly south over the Taos plains. To the left stretched the beautiful Sangre de Cristo range with the great bold Pueblo Mountain standing like a king among his warriors. Westward were

distant blue ranges and buttes, rising out of the plains.

From time to time small flurries of sand storms, miniature columns of white dust, could be seen arising out of the grass, plainly visible in the dun and yellow and red of the flower covered plains. They saw a number of Indians tilling their bits of fertile land, the same Indians who in the winter live in the oldest "apartment house" of the new world. Even while ploughing the Indians wore the customary sheet-like garment which sets them apart from all other tribes of American Indians.

So hour after hour they rode, while the Doctor told Mary of the Fourth of July celebration at which he had been present before our arrival. The little town of Taos had been thronged with quaintly dressed "Americans" who could only speak Spanish and who had come to witness the great "eagle dance" of the Indians. The braves were dressed in their feathers and loin-cloths and danced to the sound of the booming war drum played by solemn sheet-clad stoics, while in the background were the polyglot crowd and many automobile parties of tourists who happened to be passing through. The last of the day's entertainment was a baseball game in which the Indians played.

As they approached Taos the Doctor pointed out a tall cross in a field. "That is the cross of the Penitentes," he said. "It is a powerful organization, half political and half religious, like the old Templars whom you read of in Scott's novels. All the

Mexicans, probably, belong to it and yet no one will acknowledge that he belongs. Every Good Friday they have a crucifixion of one of their members, chosen by lot, which sometimes results in death. The others beat themselves or stand on sharp cactus thorns or lie on cactus beds or torture themselves in some other way, supposedly to do penance for their sins and to commemorate the death of Christ. They are cruel to themselves on these days and it is said are equally hard on other people the rest of the year. They are so powerful that no one dares touch them. They seem to own the courts and everything else."

"I wonder if nice Señor Guzman belongs," asked Mary. Guzman was one of the Mexicans of San Joachim from whom we bought eggs, a gentle, kindly appearing peasant.

"I suppose he does," answered her father.

Then they rode into Taos—old, old Taos, with its artists' colony, and its adobe houses and its two or three "department stores" to represent modern civilization. The main streets were full of strange people, Indians, Mexicans, horseback riders and automobilists and donkey drivers, all rubbing elbows. The little side streets, with adobe houses and quaint courts, seemed left to stray dogs. Mr. and Mrs. Rogers, with their three children, lived in a charming, one-story house, modeled in the old Spanish style, with barred windows projecting into the street and a beautiful inner court arranged as a garden.

On a sunny street that led from the park-like

square stood the house of Kit Carson, the famous old scout and pioneer. Here he had lived when not in the saddle and in Taos he had been buried.

They found Mr. and Mrs. Rogers at home, and received a cordial welcome.

"So the ring has gone again," said Mr. Rogers when the Doctor had told their story. "I have tried to get some information from Mateo, but he is like the Sphinx. I have tried over at the pueblo, but no one knows anything there. I am afraid that this time you will not find it again. Perhaps you are well rid of it, though! They would stop at nothing to get it, you see." While he was speaking, Anthony came in. He and Mary went off together in search of Mateo, hoping that he might take pity on the daughter of the man who had saved his life.

"I think we ought to look again in the cave," said Mary.

"That might be possible, but it's not likely they'd put it back in the old place from which it had been taken. It's more likely to be in the big cave back of the pueblo that I told your father about."

They walked along quietly for a few minutes looking for Mateo and thinking pretty hopelessly of their quest. They found Mateo working over an arrow in the garden and immediately began to persuade him to help them. Finally Mary said, "You told my father that if you could ever help him, you would, because he saved you. I think you ought to help now. You ought not to forget so soon."

"I have not forgotten. But your father, he has not ask me," replied Mateo.

"Whatever you do to help me find the ring will be doing something for him," said Mary.

"Now, Mateo, be a sport," pleaded Anthony. "You ought not to refuse anything to your foster brother, or to the daughter of the man who saved your life. They were all so good to you when you were hurt there."

The three stood silent for a moment.

"Your father, he want me to find it?" said Mateo. "Why he not come to ask me? Why he not send for me to tell me to go find it?"

"Because my father wouldn't ask anybody to do anything for him like that. But O, Mateo, please. We do want the ring so, and father did save your life."

"Very well; my life belong to him. I will give it for his daughter."

Without another word and without giving Anthony or Mary an opportunity to speak, he turned and swiftly left the garden. "Mateo, Mateo!" called Anthony. "It's no use. You can't turn an Indian a hair's breadth. Let's go back and tell them."

The two young people ran into the house and found Mr. and Mrs. Rogers and the Doctor. Mary was suddenly frightened at what she had done. It was Anthony who told of Mateo's departure.

"An Indian is usually grateful. I am afraid you have sent Mateo on a dangerous errand," said Mr. Rogers gravely.

"O, Mr. Rogers, we didn't send him. We just wanted him to tell us," said Mary, on the verge of tears.

"Mary, how could you," said her father sternly. "How could you use my name that way? Do you think a doctor would ever make use of a patient's gratitude?"

"Well, nothing can be done now," broke in Mr. Rogers. "But I certainly hope no harm will come to the boy. If he brings back the ring, Mary, you must send it off from here and never speak of its return while you are in New Mexico. You leave me your banker's address, Doctor, and if it comes after you have left today, I will send it East by registered mail."

"We wanted to ride back by the pueblo. Do you think it would be possible to find the boy?"

"No—not an Indian boy. But if you haven't been to the pueblo, it is well worth seeing. You must start early. Take a bit of lunch with us first and then start."

"We certainly have looked forward to a visit there, but I hardly want to see anything now."

"I suppose you know something of its history. The original one was built long ago, before the Spaniards came. It has been inhabited by the Indians ever since. It has been captured twice, once by those curses of the plains, the Apaches, and once by our own troops in the fifties.

"The latter affair was a great fight. It was at the time of the last big uprising, in which the Mexi-

cans joined with the Indians and massacred our governor—the time of the tragedy at Turley's Mill of which you have doubtless heard.

“News was brought to Santa Fé that the Indians were up in arms, and Colonel Price, in command at the capital, started for Taos in mid-winter with three hundred and ten men. You know the road, Doctor. I think you came in that way. Imagine pushing up the Rio Grande valley with a hostile population of Mexicans and Indians on all sides. There were at least three battles, which the Americans won by great bravery and fine marksmanship. They had been reinforced by about one hundred and twenty-five men and a howitzer that had been dragged up from Albuquerque.

“It was bitterly cold going over the mountain trails. Of course there were few roads in those days. Finally the company reached Taos, to find that the Indians and Mexicans had intrenched themselves in the pueblo. Before the invention of heavy artillery every pueblo was as good as a fort. But the Americans had come to fight the rebellion to a finish, so they attacked at once. But after a day of firing they gave it up and retired to Taos to rest.

“The next morning, refreshed by the night spent in comparative comfort and safety, they returned to the combat. There was an old church by the pueblo, and behind this the Mexicans were intrenched. Colonel Price ordered a cross fire on the building from two adjacent points by the howitzer and a six-pounder. They failed to make a breach, so the

command to storm the place was given. The little body of Americans rushed up and made some holes in the walls with axes, and through these they hurled bombs. No one had dreamed then of such hand grenade fighting as our boys did in the great war! Of course all this time the Indians and Mexicans had been keeping up a murderous fire. Many Americans were killed, but the others pressed on and finally made a real breach and entered the church. There was not much opposition from the enemy within, who promptly fled into the pueblo. But they had been so much disheartened by their losses that they sued for peace next morning. Colonel Price stipulated that all those concerned in the murder of the governor or the massacre at Turley's Mill must be surrendered. So we got our revenge for the crime at the mill and the massacre at Santa Fé by executing some of the actual criminals."

"They were splendid fellows, those early Indian fighting soldiers of ours," said the Doctor. "I am sure we ought to go to the pueblo."

As they went in to lunch, Mr. Rogers drew his arm through the Doctor's. "Now, don't take it so to heart," he said. "The children didn't mean anything bad. They just didn't think. Anthony was as much to blame as Mary."

"I suppose there is no use worrying, but it's the last thing in the world I would want to have happen."

After lunch, as they sat in the court yard, Mateo's father, a tall, fine looking man, joined them. He sat down and for a few minutes the men smoked

in silence. Then the Doctor asked of the Indian: "You don't smoke the red pipe of your fathers. Is it too heavy?"

"That is the pipe of ceremonies," was the answer.

"I have heard somewhere that all the red stone for these pipes comes from a quarry in the middle west. Is that true, Mr. Rogers?" asked the Doctor.

Mr. Rogers turned to the Indian. "Will you not tell these friends the legend?" he asked. "You know it so much better than I."

The Indian sat for a while smoking silently. Then finally he said, "I will tell the story of the red quarry for my white brother. Long years ago, before the white men came, there was a place sanctified by the Great Spirit, where my people obtained the red clay for their pipes. It was many days' journey from here, in the land of the Minnesotas. But before the Minnesotas there was in that land a tribe, Winnebago, the men from over the water. Among this tribe was a maiden, Kwölänä K'uyu'i, more beautiful than the year when it is in the spring, more pure than the white rain that falls on the summit of Pueblo when the sun stays its shortest in the heavens.

"This maiden wore upon her finger a ring, which her fathers had brought from over the great salt lake. As long as she wore it her tribe would be powerful and no man could lay his hand upon her. Then one day when the sun had just risen above the prairie, there came a stranger to the quarry to get stone for his pipe bowl. Kwölänä K'uyu'i saw him as she stood by her father's wigwam and he seemed

to her like the Great Spirit, so full of beauty and strength and wisdom. She desired to find favor in his eyes, but the magic of the ring was upon her so that he might not love her. Then the maiden, taking the ring from her hand, threw it into the great waters of the Missouri and then, fearful of what she had done, fled to ask counsel of the two old women whom the Great Spirit has hidden in two caves on either side of the quarry.

“But the river could not flow in peace while the ring lay within it but rose and overflowed its banks and flooded the plain. And still it rose. Then all the tribes of the red men fled to the hill of the quarry, for that was the highest place, to escape the waters. Higher and higher the waters rose, and the dead bodies of the red men floated upon it. Kwölänä K’uyu’i sat upon the hill and wept for her people and for the ring that she had thrown from her. All about her floated the corpses of animals and men. She alone was left. Still the waters crept nearer till they touched her feet with their cold fingers. As she clung there, the powerful war-eagle swooped down upon the hill and she caught his claw and clung to him. The mighty bird flew away, carrying the maiden to a distant mountain. Here for her pride and sin in casting away the ring, the fierce Hla-Tsiwänä wed her. From her sprang the tribes of the red men that now wander over the land.

“So she dwelt upon the mountain and labored for the fierce war-lord. And she wept for the chief whom she had so desired and she mourned for her

people who had perished because she had cast aside the ring.

"Finally the waters subsided. But the plains were red with the flesh of the red men, so that no man could stand thereon without placing his feet upon a brother. It was accursed. Nevertheless, one day when Hla-Tsiwänä had flown away Kwölänä K'uyu'i crept down the mountain to see if she might find the ring. Whether she perished of hunger, or whether she wandered away and was lost, none know. But Hla-Tsiwänä, as he flew to find her, saw the ring as it lay in the bed of the waters. It shone as the sunlight fell upon it. He swooped down and plucked it from the water. But as he flew away, a hunter shot him and his heart was pierced by the arrow, so that he fell to the ground. Then the hunter took the ring from his talons and departed.

"But evil comes to any who wears that ring, so has said the Great Spirit. For the sake of the dead that lay about the quarry, the Great Spirit decreed it should be a land of peace and that no arms might be brought there. But wherever the ring is taken, there will follow sorrow and misfortune for the red man. Some say, the waters will rise again. Some say there will be bloodshed. I know not. Twice it has caused the war drum to sound among my people. Therefore the medicine men took it and hid it where none could find it, buried it among the mountains. May the Great Spirit of the red man and the white man's God cause that it shall not again be found to cause war and weeping to my people."

The Indian gravely lighted his pipe and sat looking at nothing for a time.

No one spoke. Finally he began again. "Once it was found—once by a maiden as she worked in the corn. Many chiefs sought her in marriage. They fought for her and half of the tribe were slain. She herself was carried away by the Great Spirit and perished in the mountains. Her bones were found whitening in the hollows of the mountains, near where the Hondo flows." Again the Indian paused. "No one shall wear the ring for the evil magic brought across the Great Salt Lake clings to it. The red chief fears it. Only the medicine man may touch it."

There was a long silence. Then the Indian rose, bowed with dignity and went into the house.

"O, Mr. Rogers, do you think he was telling about my ring?" asked Mary.

Mr. Rogers looked grave. "I do not like his story, Mary," he said. "It is a warning. I am glad the ring is gone. Let us hope we do not see it again and that no harm comes to Mateo on account of his promise to you and Anthony."

"I suppose we ought to start now," said the Doctor. "We have had a wonderful experience, Mr. Rogers. And I think perhaps we are well rid of the ring. You certainly have been most kind to us, Mrs. Rogers."

They shook hands and then Mary and her father rode off towards the pueblo.

CHAPTER XI

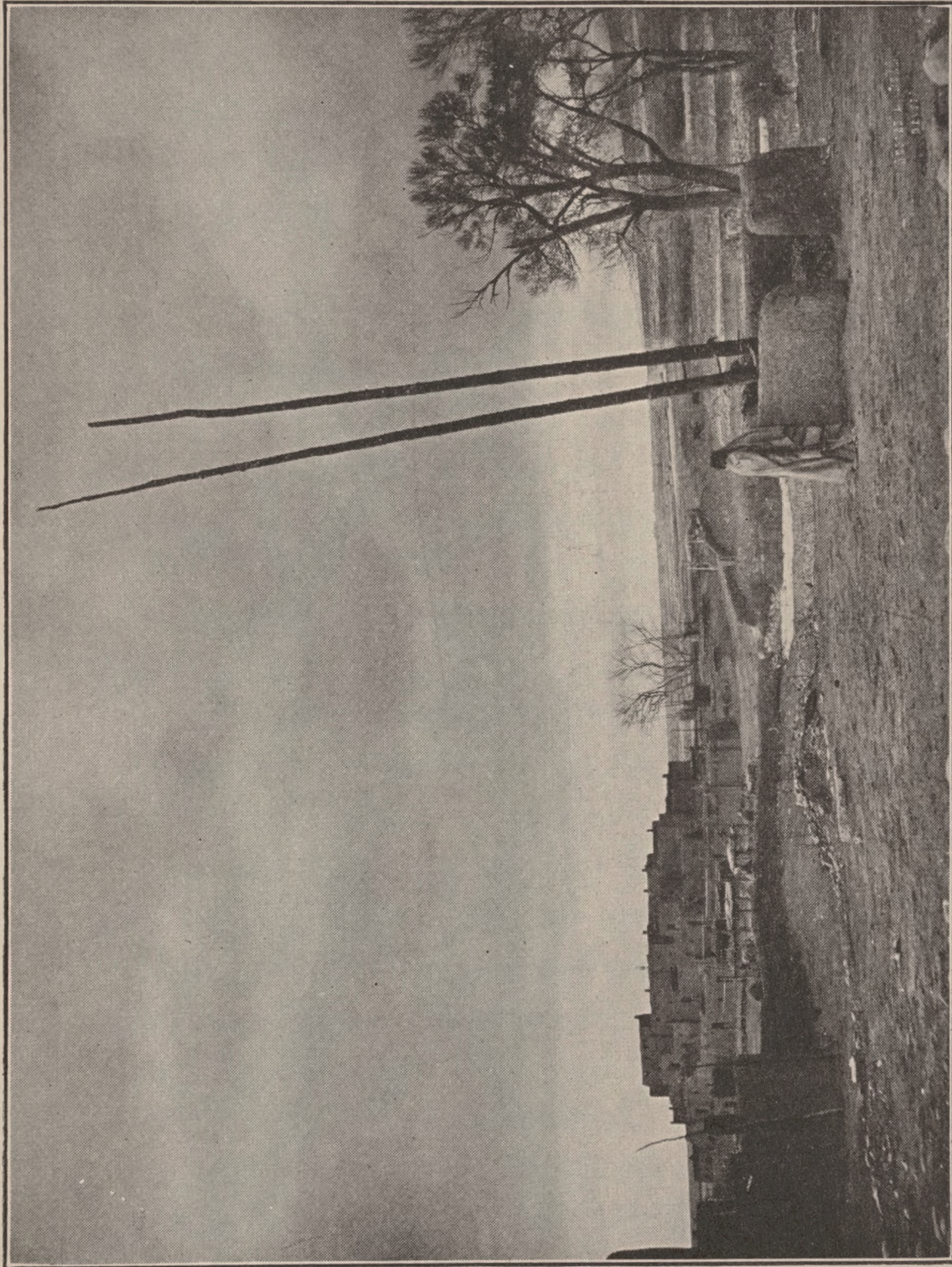
THE TAOS PUEBLO

THE pueblo consisted of two buildings between which a small stream flowed. Each was about five stories in height and built like an irregular pyramid, every story being smaller than the one below it. Thus the first story made not only a foundation for the house above, but a porch all around it as well. There were ladders from roof to roof, making outside stairways to the upper stories. Formerly there had been no doors to the bottom story, just an entrance through the roof. But now that danger from enemy tribes was past, there were several doors cut, and a number of very small windows.

"I wonder if we will see Mateo," said Mary.

"I wonder if we'll ever see Mateo," remarked her father. "The less you say about that the better."

There were a number of fat little children and scrawny dogs about and two fine looking young Indian women sat before the door. An old man was making a pair of beautifully beaded moccasins. But the young men were absent. "They have probably gone to the fields," said the Doctor. The ruins of the nearby church seemed to bring back quite clearly



Pueblo de Taos, New Mexico. Showing an estufa, or underground ceremonial chamber, in the foreground. There are seven of these estufas at Taos, each belonging to a separate secret society of the Taos Indians. The two poles are the upper portion of a ladder descending into the interior. The village is composed principally of two five-story-pyramidal structures, one on each side of Pueblo Creek. The northern building is here shown. A portion of the ancient wall is also included. (Courtesy of Denver and Rio Grande Railroad)

the old days of Indian warfare. Mary was glad that the sun was shining brightly and that she need fear no lurking savages in the woods beyond. Indeed the old man and his beads were peaceful enough.

"How would you like a pair of moccasins like that?" asked her father.

"O, Daddy, they are beautiful. I would love them."

The Doctor found that the old man understood English and probably could talk it if he had a mind to. As it was he confined his replies to yes and no and "three dollars fifty cent."

"Do you know Mr. Rogers?" asked the Doctor. The Indian nodded.

"You take the moccasins to him. He will send them to us and pay you."

The Indian nodded again.

"Ask him if he knows where Mateo is—or if he knows him," whispered Mary.

The old man glanced up from his work and a look of intelligence flashed into his black eyes.

"Hush, Mary," answered her father. He walked away and Mary followed to the edge of the court where their horses were tied.

"Why couldn't I ask about Mateo?" she asked.

"I think the less you speak of Mateo and the ring, the better for all of us," said her father gravely.

As she mounted her horse, Mary looked back and saw that the old Indian was talking to one of the women. Mary felt as though each little window was a watchful eye fixed upon them.

"How do they all live in such a stuffy place?" she asked. "Didn't you say as many as five hundred got in there in winter?"

"Yes indeed, and seem to be very comfortable. They don't insist on having a room apiece. But Dave's physiology book would say they didn't have fresh air enough, I fancy."

"Where do they cook?"

"They bake in the big adobe ovens you have noticed outside the houses. But they do their other cooking in fireplaces. Each floor has one at least and the smoke goes up through a hole in the roof. Of course it is simple and primitive. But much more comfortable than a wigwam. The northern Indians and the wandering tribes of the plains are worse off to my mind. But come, Mary, we'll have to canter a bit if we want to reach home at a reasonable hour."

The hot sun in their faces was blinding and the heat waves still rose from the meadows. But it was dusk when they reached the Hondo and the shadows lay blue in the cañons. They stopped while the horses drank. It was so still, except for the rushing brook—no sound from animal or man. In the dim light the ruins of Turley's Mill were almost lost against the cliffs back of them.

"I am glad I wasn't here then," thought Mary.

They trotted through the cañon and it was dark when they started the steep ascent toward the ranch.

"There ought to be a moon presently," said the Doctor. "It's so strange to have so few noises, and yet it isn't silent like the north woods or the snow

fields. It seems as though the quiet were full of friendliness."

They rode slowly, resting their horses from time to time.

"Dad, you don't suppose anything will really happen to Mateo," asked Mary, as they reached the top of the first hill. There was still some light in the west. The stars were very bright overhead.

"I hope not, my dear. But you know that the Indians want the ring. They will not relish its disappearance through the work of one of their own tribe."

"O dear! I wish I'd never found it. Poor Mateo—I surely hope he'll give it up."

"Well, we can't do anything about it now. You have done only too much already."

Just as the full moon rose over the mountains they climbed the last ascent. "O, Daddy, I've never seen anything so beautiful. The shadows aren't so black as at home. It all seems soft and dusky, like fairyland."

"It is too bad that we only have three weeks more," said the Doctor.

"Only three weeks! How dreadful."

"But you'll enjoy Santa Fé and the strange country to the south that we have to go through. Maybe we can take in a cliff dwelling on the way home."

"That would be fun. O, Daddy, I want to go everywhere and see everything. It's such fun. I wish the Indian ring was a wishing ring and could take me all over. But I'd hate to go without Jim

Snort. Daddy, won't it be horrid to leave him? He's such a dear pony." She patted the horse lovingly on his glossy black neck. "Couldn't we take him East?"

"I'm afraid not, Mary. You see his master is probably fond of him, too, and I don't believe he'd like the trip a bit or the autos on the state road at home. You will have to depend on the railroad trains or the wishing ring. I suppose if the Indian ring could speak it could take you into all sorts of strange places and countries—China perhaps."

"Do you really think so? O, Daddy, I wish I had it back. Maybe Mateo will find it after all. I don't believe anything will happen to him. Don't you think the story his father told about that Indian girl and the ring was about my ring—and do you suppose it was true? No, of course it couldn't have been—"

"Well, it was true in one respect, I fancy. It was a warning to my white daughter not to meddle with red man's magic, unless she wants to bring on a flood or be kidnapped and hidden away in a cave for a thousand years."

The lights of the ranch house appeared through the darkness and the dogs' noisy greetings announced that they were nearing home.

"I really am tired," said Mary with a sigh. "I'm glad we're back."

The next day was Sunday and seemed a good one for a late breakfast picnic up on the rocks by the brook. The Ransomes joined us with plenty of provisions and saucepans. The place was well back

of the Indian mounds and Mary looked wistfully at the spot where she had found her ring. Way up at the head of the cañon old Joso gazed down upon the jolly party.

"I do wish we could go up that mountain before we go," said the Doctor.

"I wish you were going to be here when the trees turn in the fall," said Mr. Ransome. "It is wonderfully beautiful. But I'm afraid you can't wait for that. Why don't we go up Joso this week? I can arrange to go next Friday if it's a good day, like today."

"It doesn't look any too good today," said Mrs. Ransome. "I think those clouds over towards the south look like rain."

"Well, this day looks good to me," answered Mr. Ransome and we all joined with him.

"If we wait for a day without thunderstorms, we'll never go anywhere," remarked Dave.

"My proposal is, that we four old folks go," continued Mr. Ransome. "Your three youngsters can lunch with Ted and Winifred and I'm sure they'll be all right."

"Of course we will," said Mary. "I can look after Dave and Trixy perfectly."

"But you mustn't any of you use the horses," I suggested. "Not while we're all gone."

"You haven't gone yet," observed Dave.

Trixy came up at this moment with a large flat stone which she assured us was an Indian bowl. "I wish I could find a ring like Mary's," she remarked.

"By the way, where is your ring, Mary?" asked Ted.

"I don't know. We haven't heard from the Rogers and we don't know anything."

"You're well rid of it," Mr. Ransome replied.

"O no, father. I want Mateo to bring it back," said Winifred. "I want to see it again."

"What became of the postman who was shot by the Indians?" asked Dave.

"And we haven't seen Mr. Esty around in some time," observed the Doctor.

"O, the Mexican got well quick. He's all right and still on the route. Esty hasn't been here since. He has a big field to cover and he often doesn't get round here for months at a time. I think if anything would bring him, Winifred would. He saved her life once and looks on her as his child."

"Tell us about it," begged Dave.

"He can tell it better than I can. It was a long time ago and she was about Trixy's age, when we were new to this country. Winifred was an adventurous little kid, like Trix, ready to be friends with everyone. She had learned to ride and was wanting to be on her pony all day long. Well, one day she got her wish. In spite of the fact that she had been forbidden to go outside the gates, off she trotted into the wilderness. I fancy a gate had been left open—for she could not have opened it herself. Anyway, dinner time came and no Winifred, though she was usually on time and a little more so, for meals. We called and we shouted and we asked

the farm men but no one had seen her and nothing could be heard of or from her. One of the Mexicans then contributed the information that he had seen Winifred ride off on her pony that morning. We found that the pony too was gone. So there was only one thing to do. We all got on our horses and scoured the country. Finally we found a Mexican who said he had met a little girl trotting along the road down towards the cañon of the Rio Grande, a most lonely path and by no means well marked.

"To make a long story short, after dark when we were all of us nearly crazy, who should meet us at the foot of the hill but Esty, leading a tired pony and carrying in his arms an even tired little girl. It seems he had found her sitting on the top of a great cliff, overlooking the cañon, where the path had abruptly stopped. The pony was cropping the short grass but his bridle was securely held by small Winifred. He asked her who she was and where she lived. She told him her name and remarked that it was a long time since she had had her breakfast. He asked her how she had gotten there. She answered that the pony had brought her but he didn't seem to know how to get home. Esty got off his horse and shared the remains of his lunch with her.

"'Weren't you afraid?' he asked her.

"She answered, 'A little.' She had heard queer noises in the cañon and had seen something yellow in the bushes down below that looked like a big dog or a very big cat. It was at this moment that

Esty himself heard a queer noise, a great sharp cry. Instantly the ranger had his gun ready.

"You remember the skin of a mountain lion that Winifred has up in her room? That was the beast that Esty shot that day in the cañon and brought home a day later and presented to a plucky little kid, as he called her. She's been his pet ever since. He said he never saw anything quieter than that child when he was going for the lion. They are fierce beasts."

"Aren't you proud of yourself, Winifred?" asked Mary. "Do you remember about it?"

"I've heard it so many times that I don't know what's true and what isn't," laughed Winifred.

"Mr. Esty and father are both awfully silly about it."

"I'd like to go down and sit on that lion skin," said Dave. "Are there mountain lions around here?"

"Not often, Dave. I don't think you need to worry about them. There used to be plenty in the old days. But they don't like people any better than people like them. So they go further and further into the wilds."

"Poor things, you make me feel quite sorry for them," said Mary. "It's hard to be a wild animal, isn't it? You get chased all over and shot at."

"They are just as hard on each other, Mary," observed the Doctor. "Wild animals are cruel and you can't get away from that. I don't believe in treating them cruelly though. Sometimes they have

to be killed but there's never any excuse for giving them unnecessary pain. If you knew how they suffer when they are trapped for their furs, you would never want to see another muff or fur coat again."

"Really, Daddy?"

"Yes, they sometimes stay for days together caught in traps that torture them until they starve to death—just because people want furs to wear and are willing to pay a lot of money for them. Of course this suffering is not necessary. But it is easier for the trappers to kill them this way, so they do it."

"Aren't there any laws to protect them?" I asked.

"Yes, but not sufficient, and it is hard to enforce any law in the wilderness. But I hope to see the day when no dumb animal must undergo pain and suffering just to give us humans ornaments that we fancy."

We sat silent for a moment and then with a sigh I started to help gather up the picnic dishes.

CHAPTER XII

A LONG DAY ON THE MOUNTAINS

AT seven o'clock on Friday morning we were ready to start. The horses were saddled and bridled, and the lunch packed in one saddle bag, while the camera was in another. Presently Mr. and Mrs. Ransome appeared on their horses.

We bade farewell to our family who were to stay behind. I confess to feeling sundry misgivings at the idea of leaving them all day with just the two young Ransomes to look after them. But I mentally called myself the wife of a pioneer and thought how many children had probably been left with people who were far less able to look after them than Winifred and Ted. After we had once started I had very little time to think of anything but keeping myself right side up on the horse, and keeping him on his feet. It has been many years since my youthful riding days. However, the ponies were surefooted and though there was an occasional slip and stumble on a rolling stone, nobody fell and presently enough confidence returned to enable me to trot on the few level places.

After we passed the timber line we had to stop

frequently to rest our horses, for the ascent was very steep and we had made fairly good time. The trail was little more than a cow path now and it was a marvel that even a cow could stay on it. Finally I felt impelled to dismount and lead my horse. It was hard work, but I preferred it. If we were to fall I wanted to have us fall apart rather than together. Mrs. Ransome was the last to leave her steed. Indeed when she dismounted we tethered the horses on a level spur of the summit and sat down to rest, to look at the superb view stretched all about us, and finally eat our lunch.

It seemed to me that the distant mountains must be a part of heaven, they were so far away and so beautiful. The range of the Rockies on which we were perched stretched endlessly north and south, rugged, and grand—with here and there a snow-crowned peak. To the southwest the flatlands.

On the top of Joso was good pasturage and here we found three or four horses cropping the short grass and the endless varieties of tiny wild flowers. They may have been wild horses. They certainly did not linger in our neighborhood.

As I was gazing out over the hills, suddenly something hit me in the back. Turning, I saw the Doctor armed with some snowballs. On the north slope there was a patch of snow. In a moment all four of us were in the snow, and for a while a lively snow fight went on. Then our attention was distracted by a queer noise. Mr. Ransome assured us it was made by marmots who live on the tops of the

mountains. The two men went down among the rocks and finally dislodged three of these strange creatures, yellow in color, that looked something like small and very woolly cats. They were shy and would not let us come near them.

It was cold, but the clouds to the south, which Mrs. Ransome had noted earlier in the day, came no nearer, although we could plainly see violent storms on different mountain peaks.

We lingered for a while, hating to leave these great high places. But finally Mr. Ransome gave the signal, the men saddled the horses and we started to lead them down the steep part of the mountain.

It sounds quite simple. But the ponies did not want to go down. They enjoyed the luscious grass. When I pulled and pulled, I finally succeeded in moving my beast, but she started rapidly and I escaped to one side lest she fall upon me. I was sure that either the pony or I would roll down the mountain. It was steep going, with only grass to hold on to in case of a slip. I was glad then that I was clad in riding breeches for I am sure a skirt would have finished me. Finally the Doctor came to my rescue and somehow, by dint of traveling rapidly, managed to get both of our horses safely to the place where we could mount. We sat down to rest at the brookside. Near us was a large cake of salt, put there for the cattle. We saw a number of Mr. Ransome's yearlings about, and two older cows came out of the woods to gaze at us solemnly. The water

was beautifully clear and cold. Mr. Ransome suggested that Dave might get the drinking water here. "There is lots of wood, too. It would be a wonderful place for the boy to find his supplies."

"I am afraid he wouldn't get back to breakfast," remarked the Doctor, "especially if he found any of these nice wild strawberries." As he spoke, the Doctor bent over and picked a spray full of sweet berries. Somehow they tasted much more delicious than those of the valley.

"I hope the youngsters are all right," I murmured, half to myself. "It seems like risking a good deal to leave them for all day this way."

"You are as bad as Dave," said the Doctor. "You will be asking how far off the Indians are and how many mountain lions there may be."

"You aren't really troubled?" asked Mrs. Ransome. "Ted and Winifred are there and the two Mexicans are very reliable."

"Suppose we start down," suggested Mr. Ransome.

"All right." I tried to jump up with enthusiasm but found I had to be assisted by both the Doctor and Mr. Ransome.

"Do you remember the sentence in *Robin Hood* about the poor sheriff?" said the Doctor.

"For weeks the poor sheriff could sit upon nought but the softest cushions," I groaned, amid laughter from the others.

"I think it would be well to ride *more, or less!*" someone said.

Mr. Ransome suggested that we ride down a different branch of the cañon. "It would be jolly to stop and see old Jenkins," he added.

"Who is old Jenkins?" asked the Doctor.

"Why, he's the oldest inhabitant—one of the very early settlers. There are ledges of ore around here and Jenkins was one of the first prospectors. He has a little log cabin and lives alone, surrounded by cigar boxes full of ore and fossils."

"It would be fun to talk to him," said the Doctor. "Let's go."

So we started down the dry branch of the cañon, whose overhanging shrubbery threatened to sweep me off my horse.

"It's a good thing we none of us wear wigs," observed Mr. Ransome.

In a very wild spot, with a magnificent view of the valley below, lived Jenkins. His cabin seemed perched on a volcanic rock. He appeared glad to see us and showed us specimen after specimen of rich ore. Each piece had a history, the rock bed of each was a familiar spot to him. "That piece? I picked that up on the old Y ledge over by Black River. It was a wild sort of place, but wonderful scenery. I recollect an Injun nearly got my scalp, when I was trying to get that piece o' metal. He thought I was makin' some bad magic against my red brothers. Those Injuns sure did think everybody was out for their hides. Maybe it ain't strange considering how the white brother has taken most everything else but his skin. Would have taken that,

too, if it had been of any salable use. That shell? It is pretty. I found it up in the rocks back of Joso Creek. I suppose some wise doc maybe could tell you where the little fellow in it lived and had his being. I've got a lot of them shell creatures. That piece of ore? That's molybdenum—least I think that's what they call it. There's a big streak of it up near the Red River cañon. They use it for hardening steel. Some 'un 'll make a fortune there some day. I showed it to an American engineer fellow who nearly jumped out of his skin.

“‘My fortune's made,’ he cackled, like an old hen. ‘I'll be the richest man this side Denver.’”

“‘Sure,’ I answered, kind of soothing, for I thought the fellow had gone crazy. But I hear he really has struck it rich.” Jenkins ran his fingers through his gray hair.

“It's a strange world. I found it and he wanted it. We're both satisfied. Can't you stay a-while and rest a bit?”

“I think we ought to be getting on,” said Mrs. Ransome. “We've left our children at home alone.”

“They'll be safe,” observed Jenkins. “I've lived alone on and off fifty years, ever since I came here as a young man, and barring a few fights with lions and Injuns and a Mexican bad-man, I've never had no ructions.”

“I hope there are no ‘ructions’ at the ranch,” I murmured, as we started down the cañon.

The descent was accomplished with no difficulty.

It seemed as though the horses must stand on their heads at times but it never really happened. Neither did the saddles ever really slip down over the animals' ears though I thought mine would.

There was a shower as we were passing through some pines and heavy thunder and bright lightning below us. I wondered if the children were in the midst of it and frightened. I wondered if Mary had boiled the potatoes properly and had heated up the things left from the day before. Perhaps they had had lunch with the Ransomes. Mary had appeared a bit forlorn when we left.

Finally we came out from the woods and looked down on the upper clearing. Everything was quiet and peaceful. I would have liked to trot then but it was quite impossible. I could only stay in the saddle at all by shifting my weight first to one leg and then to the other.

When we reached the cabin we found only the dog and the chickens. We called, but no one answered.

"They must be down at the ranch," said Mr. Ransome. "It is only half past five."

"You had better stay here and I'll ride down and bring them back," said the Doctor. So the two men rode off and Mrs. Ransome and I helped each other to dismount. She wanted to take some eggs down from the chicken house. In the cabin all looked orderly, but no lunch had been eaten. There had evidently been a heavy storm, for there was a steady drip of water from the roof and the ground was

covered with broken branches both small and great.

I threw myself into a big chair to wait and rest. Mrs. Ransome called out that she had found her eggs and was going along. So I called good-bye and waited alone. I think I must have dozed for I came to myself suddenly at the click of the gate latch and the sound of a horse trotting rapidly. I ran to the door. The Doctor was there on one of the Ransomes' extra horses. He told me that Mary had wandered off, that they were worried and that he and Mr. Ransome were going after her.

"Do you know where to go?" I asked.

He then said they thought she had gone down the hill on the Hondo road. He advised me to go down to the ranch house and wait there.

He cantered off and presently Winifred met me and we walked down to the ranch together.

She explained to me what had happened.

"They came down to lunch with us," she said. "While we were clearing up the dishes and things some one knocked. It was a young Indian boy. He said he wanted to see Mary, the white girl who had found the ring. He said he had a message for her. Mary answered that she was the girl and wanted to hear the message. He asked her if she knew Mateo and of course we all said yes. Then the boy said Mateo was hurt. He had tried to get to her but couldn't. He wanted her to come to him. Mary asked us what to do and we advised her not to go. Then the boy said that Mateo had sent some-

thing to her as a token that he really needed her help. We asked what it was and the boy drew a pouch out of his pocket. In the pouch was Mary's ring. The boy's words were:

"'Mateo he say he get you ring, you come help him.' Mary thought she ought to go but we tried to persuade her not to. Finally the boy said it wasn't far, so she started off with him."

"What time was it?" I asked.

"Oh, about three o'clock, I guess. When she didn't come back by five we got awfully scared and got hold of the Mexicans. They rode off but I don't know just how far. They haven't come back yet. O dear, if anything happens to Mary I'll never forgive myself."

By this time we had reached the ranch house. Mrs. Ransome and Ted were questioning one of the Mexicans, who had just returned. He had ridden beyond San Joachim but had found no trace of Mary. No one had seen her.

We set about getting supper, for I could not sit still and just wait.

After supper the other Mexican came back. He had met the Doctor and Mr. Ransome, who had sent him home to milk the cows. So far nothing had been heard of Mary. After the dishes had been washed we put Trix to bed. It was a great treat for her and she laughed and sang so that it seemed as though sleep would never come to her. Then Dave wanted to play cards.

It was nearly nine o'clock when the barking of

the dogs outside gave notice that some one was coming. Dave and Ted ran to the door. Mr. Ransome was there.

"Have you heard anything?" asked Ted. "Where are they?"

Mr. Ransome answered: "We got nearly to Seco and met Esty. He said he had run across a dozen or so of Indians around the Hondo ford earlier in the afternoon. They seemed to be waiting for something. He had been a little uneasy about it and had ridden back to Seco and had remained there till after dark. Just before we met him he had heard from a Mexican that a number of Indians had tethered their ponies down in the Hondo cañon in a lonely place. He had seen the ponies when out hunting for a strayed yearling. They were gone, he said, now. When we told Esty our story, he said that he and the Doctor would push on with all the men they could raise to the pueblo and see what could be done. He advised me to come back and give you the news—though it isn't much, heaven knows. We can't tell you how badly we feel," he added, turning to me. "Tomorrow I'll go off again. I'm all in tonight." His face looked quite gray in the lamplight.

"There is no one to blame," I answered gravely.

"You will spend the night here, of course. Or would you rather have Winifred or Mrs. Ransome go up to the cabin with you?"

"Of course you must stay here," said Mrs. Ransome. "The first news of any sort will be brought

here. You must not think of taking the children up to the cabin tonight."

And so it was agreed.

All the time my mind was galloping through the darkness with the Doctor and Esty. I sat up trying to read after every one else had gone to bed. Finally about eleven I shut my book and started upstairs. As I did so there came a sound of hoof beats on the road. I ran to the door and opened it just as a man came up the path to the house. He was a stranger. "Is this Mrs. Ransome?" he called, as he saw me standing in the doorway. I told him who I was.

"Then I have a letter for you from your husband," he said. "I lost my way in the dark or I would have been here before." He took a folded paper from his pocket and handed it to me.

"Come in," I said. "Is there an answer?"

"I don't believe so. No, I must get back. I can't come in."

"But it is so late," I objected. "You must be dead tired. Will you go up to my cabin and camp out—or will you come in here and lie on a sofa?" Then I opened the letter, while he stood in seeming hesitation.

The note told me that they had 'phoned from Seco to Mr. Rogers. Mr. Rogers said he had news for them. Mary was in the hands of the Indians, but he was sure they would not hurt her. He thought he could get her release the next morning. He advised them to spend the night at Seco and proceed

to Taos early the next morning. Mateo had come in that afternoon and had promised to watch and make reports. The boy who brought the note was to spend the night and return next morning. He himself might not be back for another day but would send word by 'phone to Seco and would arrange for someone to bring the message.

The familiar handwriting brought me some comfort, but there was little of comfort in the news.

"The Doctor says you are to stay here and go home tomorrow," I said. "If you wait I will go up and speak to Mrs. Ransome."

CHAPTER XIII

CAPTURED BY THE INDIANS

THE messenger was gone when I woke in the morning. Indeed, everyone had breakfasted when I appeared downstairs.

Nothing more had been heard and we prepared to settle down to our usual tasks. There was nothing we could do. Mr. Ransome had not started yet.

"I know that Rogers will see to everything better than I could. And Esty has the machinery of the law at his disposal," he explained. "I sent word by the messenger that I would be down at Seco about two o'clock and could bring back any word that might be 'phoned in."

That seemed a good arrangement. So Dave, Trixy and I went back to the cabin, where we all had our "chores" to do. It was a long day of waiting.

About supper time Mr. Ransome rode up to the cabin. He had just come back from Seco. Dave, Trixy and I all ran out to hear what news he brought.

He dismounted and sat down on the porch with us. He began his story. "When I got to Seco, I 'phoned over to Mr. Rogers's house in Taos. He

was not at home but was expected soon. The Doctor and Esty had been there and they three had ridden off together early in the morning. I waited until nearly four and then 'phoned again. Mr. Rogers answered the 'phone. He said he could not go into all the details but they hoped to get Mary that afternoon. As soon as they found her, he would bring her up in his auto. He was confident that she was unhurt. I think that you can trust absolutely to what Mr. Rogers says. He knows his Indians." So Mr. Ransome ended. We thanked him for his news and his journey and he urged us to take supper at the ranch. But I thought we had better stay at home.

"The children had so much excitement last night. They must get to bed early," I said.

Mr. Ransome stayed for a while, chatting. Then he mounted and rode off.

"You be ready to help with the cows tonight, Dave and Trix," he called as he went.

The children helped get supper. Trixy set the table and Dave brought in the milk and butter from the stream, while I did the cooking.

"Mother," he remarked, as I was making some milk toast, "my physiology book says that toast ought never to be made over kerosene."

"Then make me a wood fire," I answered, a little impatiently.

Dave made no more remarks. Presently Trix heard the heralding bell of the cow leader and she and Dave rushed out to assist at the milking. They

loved to drive up the cows and then hold the calves, while the mothers produced milk for human babies as well as their own children.

Finally Trix was put to bed. She seemed to have caught the nervous feeling in the air, for she called to me repeatedly. She knew she had heard a rattlesnake! She knew she had heard a mountain lion! Then she knew she heard a queer sound like an Indian makes. So I sat beside her till Dave called to me that he had heard something on the porch and would I please come. So I left the drowsy Trix and went to Dave in the living room.

"Come out on the porch, I will show you that there is nothing there," I said. He evidently hated to go but was about to yield when a most unearthly cry broke the stillness of the night. For a moment I was startled. Then I laughed, "It's only a coyote. There, Dave, you've always wanted to hear one."

"I'd rather hear it when Daddy is here," remarked Dave in a low voice. We stepped out onto the dark porch. The stars were very bright but looked uncommonly far away.

"Keep still, maybe we'll hear the coyote again," I whispered. But instead of the strange cry we heard a much more welcome sound; the dogs barking down at the ranch and the distant honk of a machine.

"It must be Mr. Rogers' machine, bringing Mary," whooped Dave.

I felt myself growing suddenly faint and sat

down on the porch. But in a moment I was myself again. "We mustn't be too sure," I said. "They may not have brought her. It may be some other machine."

"Well," remarked Dave, "there haven't been many auto parades since I've been here." He took my hand and together we went down to the gate.

There came a whoopee from down the lane and five minutes after Anthony and Mary were both hugging me.

"Father'll be up in a minute," gasped Anthony, who was the first to recover his equilibrium. We went up to the cabin.

"Where are the Doctor and Mr. Esty?" I asked as I clung to Mary.

"Esty stayed at Seco, but the Doc will be up in a minute with Dad. He just stopped to speak to the Ransomes. I guess they'll all be up to hear the details," he added laughing.

Mary did not speak till we got to the house.

"Mary's awfully tired," said Anthony quietly.

"I'm not, either," she answered indignantly, and bursting into tears, ran into the cabin. I made some hot cocoa for her and gave her food which she ate with a reassuring appetite. But she certainly looked weary, although she had stopped crying.

Then we heard voices, the gate clicked, and the rest arrived, Ted, Winifred, Mr. Rogers and the Doctor.

"Well, we've brought her back safe to you," said Mr. Rogers, "ring and all. But for heaven's sake,

send that ring off and let everybody know it's gone, or there won't be any peace hereabouts."

"You can take it back to Taos tomorrow and keep it if you want," said the Doctor grimly. "I've had enough of it."

"I think my little friend Mary would rather have it sent back home to show off to her schoolmates, wouldn't you, Mary? Why, bless me, where is the child?" exclaimed Mr. Rogers.

"I think she has probably slipped off to bed," I answered. "She is overwrought tonight. She must not talk any more."

"She certainly must not!" said the Doctor. "She must turn in right away in the room next to ours and I may give her a pill or two to keep her from dreaming." The Doctor left the room as he spoke, and I knew he had gone to be with Mary.

"I'm not going back till tomorrow afternoon. We can tell you all the details of our part of the adventure in the morning. You must all be tired. It has been a hard two days for you. It has been a narrow escape for your daughter," he ended gravely.

Just then the Doctor came in and handed an envelope to Mr. Rogers.

"Here is the ring," he said. "My address is on it. Will you send it by registered mail from Taos tomorrow and mention it publicly? May heaven preserve the train it goes on! Are you sure you don't mind adding one more cause for gratitude to the long list we owe you?"

Mr. Rogers took the ring. "I will send it by tomorrow's mail and I trust never to see it again. Come Ted, come Winifred and Anthony, let's go back to the ranch."

We shook hands and they left us. I looked through the door to Mary's bedroom, and saw the Doctor dimly in the darkness seated by her. There was no sound. So I thought I would not disturb her, but went back and cleared off the dishes from the table.

Presently the Doctor came softly into the room.

"She is asleep," he said. "I have given her some dope so that she will not wake up. She has had a bad experience but it might have been much worse. Don't you think you had better wait till tomorrow to hear it all? You look about as tired as Mary."

"Nonsense," I said, "I'm not a child; I want to hear it all now."

And then to my surprise I followed Mary's example and burst into tears.

"That settles it," observed the Doctor. "You are not tired, and you are not a child, but as your physician, I recommend bed, and stories tomorrow."

He spoke with the authority of the whole medical profession, and I very meekly obeyed. But I thought I could not wait till the next day to hear of their adventures.

Trixy was the first up the following morning. I heard her dimly, trying not to make any noise, but every once in a while dropping shoes and nameless articles with a thump. Then Dave joined her and

I heard them, still as in a dream, telling each other to be quiet in noisy whispers. Finally I got up and putting on my dressing gown and slippers, gave them their breakfast and turned them out.

It was after ten when Mary and the Doctor were up for the day and nearly eleven when the Ransomes and Mr. Rogers and Anthony appeared. We all sat around the big Douglas fir and settled down to hear the story of Mary's adventure.

CHAPTER XIV

HOW IT ALL HAPPENED

SUPPOSE I begin," said Mr. Rogers. "Then Mary can tell her tale and finally we'll end up with the Doctor." To this we all agreed, so he began.

"Late Friday afternoon Mateo came into the living room. He was unusually stirred up for one of his race and habits but I waited for him to speak first. We hadn't seen him since he had gone for the ring, so I naturally supposed that it was something connected with that. Finally I asked him if he had found the ring. He answered 'No,' that he had found out something more important. The Indians from the pueblo were going to get some white girl and take her to the cave, there to abide forever as guardian of the ring. I knew Mary was fond of her ring but I didn't think she would want to stay there forever! I asked Mateo how he knew. It seems in his hunt for the ring he had run into a secret council down in the Kiva where they hold their meetings. No one had seen him and he had been able to hear all of the plan. Of course he came to me as soon as possible. I asked Mateo when they were to go and he told me that afternoon.

“‘Will they return to the pueblo tonight?’ I asked. He thought so, but wasn’t sure. He thought that we should watch the pueblo. I felt that it was our only chance, for once they were up in the cave, I thought it would take a regiment and a big gun battery to dislodge them. I sent Anthony and Mateo with a couple of trusty men to keep watch and I notified the police and had a sort of still alarm sounded.

“About nine o’clock the ’phone rang, and the Doctor was at the other end. I told him what I knew and he told me what he knew and we found it wasn’t very much put together. But it seemed encouraging on the whole. I felt sure the Indians would return after dark and do nothing more until early next morning. So I advised the Doctor to that effect. I did not begin to be troubled till about midnight. Then as Mateo and Anthony had not returned, I feared that the Indians had gone straight to the cave and that it meant arousing the country. I called up the sheriff, who finally came to and promised me a posse in the morning.

“About seven o’clock Esty and the Doctor rode in and we held a council of war. The boys had not returned and I was troubled about them also. We decided we’d scout up the mountain a bit, so we started out and met the sheriff’s posse. Now Mary, it’s time for you to continue.”

“Well,” said Mary, “Winifred told you how it began. I was scared to go along with the Indian but I thought Mateo had been hurt trying to find

me, that I ought to help him if he wanted me. I fastened the ring onto the ribbon that holds my pen; you know what I mean. Well, we went on and on, down a trail that led down into the cañon. I was sort of troubled, and said I thought it was pretty far. He said that in a minute we'd find horses.

"Well, we soon found two ponies. I said I didn't want to go on horseback so far. He told me Mateo was very sick and that I must. I don't know why but I was scared by his voice. I thought though that maybe if I was on a horse I could ride back if anything happened. So I got on. The Indian took my bridle and led my horse. I tried to stop him but he began to gallop and I had to hold on. I tell you, I wished I hadn't come. Well, we rode for a long time it seemed to me, and we got down into a deep gully and then I saw a lot of Indians. I was scared. Something made me stick the ribbon with the ring on it inside my dress where it couldn't be seen.

"I turned to the Indian boy and called him a liar. Of course there was no sign of Mateo. 'Where are you going to take me?' I asked. And I begged so hard for them to let me go. I told them I'd give up the ring and go away. They said I must go with them.

" 'Our little white sister will guard the ring by the holy fire of our fathers. She will always have the ring and we will be blessed with peace and prosperity. So the medicine man has decreed!' I felt

as if I was in a fairy story and had made the wrong wish and had been forced by a bad fairy to take the consequences.

"I did not know where I was but I thought that maybe if I screamed, some one would hear me, so I yelled as loud as I could. Instantly one of the men came over and put his big dirty hand on my mouth. He told me that if I screamed he would have to hurt me to keep me quiet, but if I promised to make no noise, they wouldn't hurt me. Of course I was dreadfully scared. So I promised to be quiet. We stayed there the rest of the afternoon. I cried a lot. No one paid any attention to me, but every time I moved even the least little bit some one would be at my side.

"Finally it got dark. I was hungry and thirsty but they wouldn't give me anything to eat. One of the men offered me his water bottle to drink out of. But he was so dirty I couldn't. When it was dark they put me on the horse again, and warned me again to be silent. A young man got up behind me so that I couldn't escape in the dark. He was awfully smelly and I hated it. I tried to make him let me go, but he wouldn't even answer. Finally we crossed over a bridge. I begged again for some water and one of the Indians got me a drink. I would have drunk out of anything by that time.

"I got so tired and sleepy I couldn't keep awake and finally I guess the Indian must have held me on. I just went to sleep, I guess. Every time the horse changed his pace much, I'd half wake up and

feel that we were still going. The next thing I remember was coming wide awake. It was light and we were in the woods. We were going up, instead of down. My Indian was still holding onto me. I was dreadfully lame and stiff and begged to be allowed to get off. We sat down and rested for a little while. There were only about six or seven Indians left. One of them gave me some bread and bacon and a drink. My, I was glad to get them.

“After maybe half an hour they started off again. We all walked now. It was awfully steep and I had to climb on my hands and knees some of the time. I thought I’d try to run away. Of course I didn’t know where we were. We met an Indian in the woods who had a gun. He talked to my Indians but of course I couldn’t tell what they said. I thought that this would be a good chance to try to get away. I got a little way and fell down. It was so steep and rough and I was so tired. The Indians seemed to think it was funny. I stayed where I had fallen for a few minutes. Then one of the men fired a shot close to me and told me to get up. I got up but I had fallen down an awfully steep place and I was discouraged, it was so hard. I know now how horses feel on slippery hills. The youngest Indian seemed to think it was funny. I got to a muddy place and every time I climbed up it, he’d push me down. Finally I got mad and threw some mud at him. It hit him in the face. That amused the others and one of them helped me over

the worst place. He warned me not to try to escape again.

"Well, we went on. I'd have given anything to slap that Indian's face. The mud had made him angry and I felt sure he'd try to pay me back. The woods got thicker and thicker. He'd walk in front of me and let the bushes jump back so that they'd hit me. Finally the path sort of stopped, at a big pine. We turned then and made our way through a thick lot of bushes. There was a man behind and the horrid one in front and I just had to go on. Once my hair caught in some low twigs and the horrid one pulled it loose and hurt me like fun. O, I did want to kick him. Then we came out on an open space. It was a clearing in front of a cave, much, much bigger than the one we went to before. We all sat down. I just gave up and began to cry. After a while two Indians with sheets over them came out of the cave. One of the men who had brought me told me to get up and go into the cave with the others. I begged hard to be let go but they made me go inside. There were three or four others there. I sat down again on the floor of the cave.

"Then one of the sheeted ones came over to me and squatting down, pulled the string with the ring on it. They all squatted down and began to mutter queer things. Then the first one went back and another came along, and so on. I think it was the third one who muttered something I thought I could understand. I listened hard and was sure I heard English.

“ ‘Don’t show any surprise but get up and follow me when I go out of here. I will stand back of the circle and raise my arm.’

“I felt sort of sick when I heard those English words. It seemed as though I knew the voice, too. But I didn’t dare to do anything different. The sheeted one went back then and some one else took his place. I thought I had better get up so as to be ready to follow the mysterious one. When I got up, they all sort of wandered around and finally I saw one in the back raise his hand. So I walked boldly forward, though I was scared to death. They seemed surprised but I went straight on and followed my guide down a dark passage. He went faster and faster and so did I. It was dark as night but finally I saw a tiny light ahead. Then we went down and down and finally I heard water and a brook seemed to spring out of the ground right under our feet. It was not quite so dark and I could see the water as well as feel and hear it. Next it got so light I could see that the sheet was gone from my guide. Then the top of the passage got so low we had to stoop and finally to crawl along the brook. We were going down all the time. Then my guide whispered to me to wait. He went on ahead and suddenly disappeared. Then I heard a whistle that was unmistakably *Marching Through Georgia*.

“I guessed whoever was whistling was white, so I crawled on as fast as I could and got out into a small cañon, where the brook rushed down into a

waterfall. Two people kept me from tumbling down it. They were Mateo and Anthony. My, I was glad to see them! I *was* glad to see them.

"They told me not to lose any time, so we started along down by the brook. It was awfully hard going but they helped me a lot, and I knew I was getting away. I guess it was getting on towards afternoon when we finally rested in a thick clump of bushes. Then Anthony gave me some food. O, but it was good! Of course I was dead tired but I wanted to know all about everything.—Now, Anthony, you've got to talk. I'm dead."

"I should think you would be," said Mrs. Ransome.

Mary came over and cuddled beside me, while Anthony continued.

"When Mateo and I went out Friday night, he was pretty worried. He didn't think they'd dare to take Mary to the pueblo. So after we'd hung around in the bushes till about ten that night, we sat down to talk it over. He said he thought they would take her straight to the cave. 'Do you know where it is?' I asked him. He said he did; that his mother's father was one of the high muck-a-mucks and he knew a secret way, too, that he'd discovered once when they had started to train him to be a medicine man. He hadn't wanted to stay as a medicine man, as he liked his white brother better. So he got away through this secret passage.

"We got some food and proceeded up the mountain with the first crack of dawn. We went Indian

fashion, and didn't see anyone. Just once I remembered the white man who had gone cave hunting and had never come back. But most of the time I was too busy planning. I waited for hours at the mouth of that secret passage and finally about noon Mateo came out. He had somehow managed to get into that sheet party and had brought Mary back with him. We got back to father's just after he did.

"I never saw anyone eat more than Mary did. But believe me, we did some fast driving to get up to the ranch from Taos last night."

"You certainly are the hero," I said. "We can never thank you all enough."

"Me? Why it was all Mateo. We never could have gotten her without him. But he'll never tell how he did it. He will never tell any more than he has now."

"I'll get Mateo the best rifle he ever saw when I get to Santa Fé," remarked the Doctor.

"I think we must get back to the ranch now and off to Taos early this afternoon," Mr. Rogers said. He got up. "It's been a pretty exciting adventure. I hope it's the last that comes to this quiet neighborhood. Good-bye all. I trust we may meet again. I believe you people are going soon."

"Alas, yes," I answered.

"Our reservations have been taken for some time, but I think we may go down to Santa Fé a little earlier than we had planned," remarked the Doctor.

So we bade good-bye to those two good friends, Anthony and his father.

"You'll be coming east one of these days to college, Anthony," I said. "If you do, remember that our home is yours."

Then they all went off down the road and the last thing we heard was Anthony's whoopee.

CHAPTER XV

AN AMATEUR FISHERMAN

I THINK Dave and I ought to have one last trip before we go home," said the Doctor that evening. "Where shall it be, Dave?"

"I'd like to go down to the Rio Grande, fishing," answered Dave promptly.

"That sounds all right. We'll go tomorrow unless I ought first to go to Taos for Mr. Ransome's horse."

"Mr. Ransome said they were going to a dance at Taos Wednesday. He said he'd bring back the horse."

"That is certainly nice of him. Well, Dave, tomorrow then. We haven't any time to waste, for I think we'll leave here Saturday for Santa Fé. There are lots of interesting things to see there, and it is only a little earlier than we had planned to go. I must see Mr. Ransome tonight, and ask him about the auto."

"O, Dad, can I come too?" called Trix.

"If it's not too late and Mother agrees."

So Trix and the Doctor started off together. But they met the cows with Mr. Ransome and Pedro

and turned back. We all walked over to the corral to be present at the daily ceremony of milking.

The Doctor inquired about another trail to the Rio Grande cañon and also asked Mr. Ransome to engage the auto for Friday to take us to the railroad, forty miles away. He thanked him for offering to bring back the horse.

"You had best look out for Dave tomorrow," said Mr. Ransome, "if you are to make a trip together. He is sort of put out because Mary had such an exciting adventure. I am sure he will seize every chance to get into trouble."

Dave indignantly denied this.

"I shouldn't wonder," said the Doctor. "Perhaps we shall meet up with something. We ought to start early. Let us begin our adventure by trying to catch the ponies before it gets any darker."

So the two went off in the twilight, down to the lower pasture where the horses were enjoying good food and a chance to gallop. They were evidently feeling well for they refused to be coaxed and presently started off at a run, the Doctor and Dave after them.

"You go down to the lower end and drive them towards me," said the Doctor. "I will be near this corner of the fence and try to drive them in, so that we can corner them."

"Don't you think I'd better wait here and you go down to the farther pasture?" asked Dave.

The Doctor laughed. "No, Dave, you could not catch them so well."

The boy reluctantly started off. It seemed very dim and the bushes and trees loomed mysteriously. Suddenly he heard the sound of thudding hoofs, and two great shapes galloped straight at him. Dave fled behind a tree, and the ponies rushed past. After them went Dave, whooping in true cow-puncher style. But it is easier to say "drive them into a corner" than to do it. The boy felt that he had been all over the field a dozen times and had narrowly escaped death five times at least before the horses got within reach of the Doctor's hand.

At last they were caught and taken into the small enclosure for the night.

It was absolutely dark by this time, for it had turned cloudy and Dave walked close to his father.

"What are you thinking of?" asked the Doctor, after a few minutes' silence.

"Well, I was wondering if I could kill a mountain lion without a gun. Can't I have a gun, Dad?"

"Maybe, some day. Not yet. Do you remember the rhyme,

" 'Boy, Gun,
Great fun!
Gun bust,
Boy dust!' "

"Now, Dad."

"Are you afraid in the dark, Dave?"

"No, of course not. But I think the dark is more full of things to see. And one hears so many more things at night."

They started early the next day, with the fishing

tackle and the camera and plenty of bread and bacon and sweet chocolate.

Mary, Trix and I decided we would commence packing.

"I hate to think of going so soon, Mother," said Mary. "But it will be fun to see Santa Fé and we surely can stop off and see the cousins in Chicago, can't we?"

"We surely can," I replied.

Meanwhile the Doctor and Dave trotted gaily down the mountain to San Joachim. After passing the little village the road became a trail and then it was hard to find. However, they knew the general direction, and as Mr. Ransome said, "The Doctor always gets there though usually not by any trail any one else has ever used."

They made several false starts; one trail ended in a precipice, another in a field of wheat, but at least they could look down into the wild cañon and see the turbulent river flowing swiftly eight hundred feet below.

They got into a rocky brookbed.

"This must go down to the river, let's try it," said the Doctor.

"Why must it, Dad?"

"It isn't likely that as big a brook as this would stop and if it continues it must flow into the river. Haven't you read that in your geography?"

"I guess so. How did the river ever get down so far, with such high banks?"

"It used to be on top centuries ago. But the



"BE SURE TO HOLD THE HORSES TIGHT?"

stone and soil were fairly soft and so gradually the river wore it away and wore it away. Maybe some day it will be deeper still and the present level where the river flows be up in the air somewhere."

They had to proceed very slowly. Finally the Doctor bade Dave dismount and lead his pony. Jim Snort was pretty good about jumping down precipitous rocks but Nellie had to be coaxed, and at last planted her four feet and refused to move.

"I'll go ahead a bit and try to find how near the river is. We can't be far above it," said the Doctor. "Be sure to hold the horses tight."

After a few minutes he returned. "We had better tether the horses here," he said. "There is a little grass and a trickle of water. They will be all right. Are you ready for some rough climbing?"

"Sure, Dad."

The ponies were soon fastened to bushes by long halter ropes, and Dave and his father proceeded down the cañon by leaps and bounds and painful efforts.

"Dad, I hear the water rushing, and O! I can see it. Why is it so yellow?"

"It is pretty shallow and very swift and brings down lots of dirt and mud with it."

"My, but it's hot," said Dave, as he threw himself down on the dry sand that bordered the river.

The sun beat down upon them and even the breeze that blew down the river failed to cool them.

"How about a swim, Dave? You'll have to be careful, as the current is so strong."

"I'd love it. Come on. But, Dad, my physiology book at school says you mustn't get into cold water when you are very hot."

"If you mention that book again, Dave, I'll drown you. Cool off if you want to. It probably would be better." But Dave did not wait long. Presently they both stripped and gingerly stepped into the swift flowing stream.

"Gee, but it's cold," shivered Dave.

"Hurry up, get your dip and come out."

Dave got on a rock that jutted out and jumped in. Instantly he was carried down, fighting for breath in the icy water.

His father ran down the bank and then swam out and caught him. The Doctor did not waste much time in conversation as they struggled to shore. But when they got to land, "What on earth did you do that for?" he asked.

"You t-t-told m-m-me to g-g-get my d-d-dip," chattered Dave.

"I didn't mean to jump off in the middle of the river. If I had not been right on hand it would have been a case of drowned boy. Come, run up and down for a minute to get warm again. Now put on your clothes."

"But I'm wet, and O Dad, there goes my shirt!"

A sudden puff of wind arising, picked up the small garment and in a moment it was fluttering half out of the water in mid-stream.

"Just watch yourself go, Dave," said his father. "That might have been you."

Dave ruefully saw his shirt disappear under the waves.

"Shall we fish first or eat first?" asked Dave, when they were both dressed.

"I think I'll fish a bit, but it doesn't look hopeful right here. Let's walk up to the shade of those trees. Maybe that will be a better place."

Evidently it was Dave's unlucky day. When he first cast, he caught his father's hat. Then he got a hook caught in his hand. But finally they both started.

"If you have one more mishap, you'll have to quit, Dave," remarked his father. They fished for a while and then Dave got a bite. He started excitedly to reel in and then suddenly let go.

"What's the matter?" asked his father.

"A mosquito bit me," said Dave crossly. He cast again and tangled his line in his father's.

"For goodness' sake, go farther away," exclaimed his father, and Dave moved off.

There seemed to be plenty of fish, but for a while, as Dave said, mosquitoes were the only ones that bit. But at last the Doctor landed three good ones in rapid succession.

Then Dave caught one and the Doctor had to stop and take it off. They got about a dozen in all and then the boy suggested that it ought to be nearly lunch time. So a fire was made and some of the fish fried with the bacon on hot rocks.

"My, but it's good," murmured Dave. "But is it all right to use the dirty stones? My physiology book says—"

"Dave, I'll throw you in the river if you mention that book again. Eat your lunch and be thankful. You've seldom eaten a cleaner or better one."

After lunch the Doctor stretched out for a while and Dave went exploring. He found some interesting tracks in the wet sand by the river which the Doctor proclaimed cow tracks. He walked down the bank and finally discovered distinct marks of a clawed foot on the sand.

"It might be a bear or it might be a mountain lion," the Doctor decreed.

They tried fishing again but only caught one little one. Then, as it was half past three, they started the hard climb up the cañon to find the horses.

"I hope they'll be there," remarked Dave.

Nellie and Jim Snort expressed themselves as glad to see their masters. As Dave was putting the bit into Jim's mouth he asked his father why bits didn't hurt.

"They do hurt if you jerk your horse's mouth," replied the Doctor. "There is a sort of callous in a horse's mouth where the bit lies, but if you saw on it, there must be pain. Bits ought to be warmed in winter. The metal hurts a horse if it is put in when very cold. I am afraid a good many drivers don't do this. I expect animals have to suffer a lot from the ignorance and carelessness of us humans."

"I think people who own horses ought to be licensed like chauffeurs," said Dave.

"That would be a good plan. Perhaps when you

are a man they will. Animals are treated much more humanely now than when I was a boy."

"We're taught a lot about animals in school. Dad, have you ever seen a bull fight?"

"I went to one, once. But I couldn't stay through. It was bad enough to see a bull tortured but I couldn't stand seeing the poor old horses. Some of the bull fighters, the picadors as they are called, ride on the oldest, most miserable creatures. These are blindfolded. They cannot see and are gored and hurt and ripped open by the angry bull. They haven't even a fighting chance. It is too cruel."

"Why do they do it, Dad?"

"Because some humans are still cruel, like wild animals—only not as noble as wild animals, for they run no danger themselves but enjoy seeing other men and dumb animals in danger and pain. It is exciting and sportsmanlike to take your life in your hands and go hunting big game. But I would about as soon spend a day in a slaughter house as at a bull fight."

"Isn't there a good deal of danger for the man who kills the bull, and doesn't he have to be pretty skillful?" asked Dave.

"The man who kills animals in the stock yards has to be skillful. As to danger, the toreador, as he is called in Spanish, is seldom hurt—certainly not if he knows his business. They usually live to a green old age and retire wealthy."

"But they do have to know their business, as you say," persisted Dave.

"Yes, they have to be skillful. But I grudge any praise to such a cruel sport."

"They have bull fights in Mexico. Are the Mexicans crueller than we?"

"They haven't been taught to be so kind to animals. Do you remember Mr. Ransome's telling us about the Mexican who rode his horse nearly to death just because he, the rider, got cooler when he rode fast?"

They had led their ponies up out of the cañon and now trotted along through the scrub pines on the comparatively level ground. The river and its banks had vanished.

"I am sorry this is our last ride," sighed Dave. "It certainly has been a great summer."

CHAPTER XVI

ON THE ROAD TO SANTA FE

EVERYTHING was packed. The last breakfast had been hurriedly eaten at six o'clock. The last snapshots had been taken. At six-thirty we piled into the auto that was to take us back to railroad trains and other stupid things. Trunks, bags, roll-ups were roped about us. We were in layers. But everyone felt so miserable at leaving that there were no complaints. The Ransomes waved good-bye and we were off, amid promises to return and cordial invitations.

Mr. Ransome had brought word from Mr. Rogers that the ring had gone and the post office receipt was in the Doctor's pocket.

"I hope you find the ring safe when you get home," called Ted as we drove away.

It was like coasting down a toboggan slide and we hoped that our chauffeur was a skillful one. He kept up a pleasant stream of talk but showed that he was equally efficient in deed by getting us down safely to Hondo, where we crossed the river. Here the way ran between two pastures. Suddenly a herd of cattle seemed to sweep down towards the

road. Two great creatures broke through the fence and began a lively fight.

"Here's your bull fight, Dave," remarked the Doctor. "Only it's bull to bull, not bull to man."

The two bulls had evidently been struggling together in the pasture and had decided to finish it out on the road. They were large animals, and as they strained, head against head, it was a terrible sight.

"It's lucky their horns are off," remarked the driver.

"Why?" asked Dave.

"One of 'em would be dead by this time, son. As it is, see the blood on the white fellow's head."

"Can't we get by?" asked Mary. "Why are we stopping?"

"If them two critters took it into their heads to come this way, they'd go clean through this old machine. They're big fellows. I think I'll get out and see what can be done."

"I want to go too," cried Dave, and "I want to go too," echoed Trix.

"You'll stay right here," answered the chauffeur, as he went, followed by the Doctor.

"Do take the camera," I urged, "and don't get too near."

The Doctor grinned. "Hang your clothes on a hickory limb but don't go near the water." He didn't take the camera. The two men approached discreetly, but they might have brought a fife and drum corps with them for all the attention they attracted. Our chauffeur picked up some big stones

and threw them at the maddened animals, but even that made no impression.

I think it was at that moment that Dave stepped out with the camera, and before I knew it had run up close to the fighting beasts. They were almost motionless, each exerting his utmost force to dislodge the other, each powerless to stir his enemy.

"Dave, go right back," called his father.

But Dave snapped the camera twice and as he did so, I saw that the black bull was slowly pushing the other one towards the ditch.

Dave and the two men raced back to the auto.

Twice we thought the road would be clear; and twice the white bull came back. But the third time as we watched breathlessly, the black one succeeded in bringing the other to his knees in the ditch. Instantly our driver started up and much to the children's regret we hurried on our way.

But as we looked back, we saw that the white bull had risen to his feet again. The two great creatures were again pushing, straining every nerve, each unable to dislodge the other.

The Doctor was angry at Dave's escapade and the chauffeur made sundry remarks about what happened to little boys in his day who disobeyed their Pas.

"Did you get a picture?" whispered Mary. And Dave nodded a delighted yes.

"Do you suppose they'll be there next year, when we come back," asked Trix.

"I don't think so," I replied.

"How long will they be there?" she asked again.

"Until one of them falls dead," answered our chauffeur cheerfully.

"Why will they drop dead?" asked the persistent seeker after knowledge.

"My physiology book says that bulls ought to be shut up," remarked Dave.

"Why are bulls like little boys?" said Mary promptly.

"I wish we could shut up that physiology book," added some one else.

"Well, at least it's made an impression. Does it tell you to brush your teeth and obey your father?" asked the Doctor.

"Now, Dad, I think you're mean," exclaimed Dave.

We went along rapidly for some time, through Taos, through Ranches de Taos, even more ancient, with nothing but picturesque adobe houses and an old adobe church. It was like a bit of old Syria. Then over miles of rolling grazing grounds where cattle wandered and chewed the cud of peace.

Our chauffeur turned in his seat. "I suppose you folks saw Kit Carson's house back yonder in Taos," he asked.

"I did," answered Mary.

"I didn't," said Dave.

"Why, Dave, I took you there," said the Doctor. "You probably were dreaming of your physiology book."

"Anyways," remarked the chauffeur, "those bulls

made me think of a story about Kit. He was hunting buffalo when he was scouting with Frémont, and not satisfied with the critters he'd killed, started chasing a big buffalo bull. Well, Kit finally hit him under the shoulder—couldn't get a good aim 'cause his horse was tired. Just as he fired, the horse stepped into a prairie dog hole and bang, down he went, throwing Kit fifteen or twenty feet over his head. Well, it surprised him some. But he had wits enough left to see that Mr. Bull was coming to find the fellow who'd plugged him. Up jumps Kit and runs for his life with that bull bellowing after him.

"Kit run as he never had before and that was going some. He knew that a bend of the Arkansas River was ahead and if he could get there first he'd have some chance. I wished I could have seen it."

"Did he get there?" gasped Dave.

"Sure he did. No buffalo could kill Kit. It was a big, swift stream but he liked its looks better than the fellow behind. Down he went, head first, and came up puffin'. There stood Mr. Bull on the bank and there seemed to be nothing for Kit to do but stay in the water. Whenever he struck out towards the shore, the bull was there ahead watching for him. Well, the noise of the shot had attracted some other hunter and by and by a shot put an end to the bull and Kit skinned him.

"Kit was a great shot. It's told of him that he once killed five animals with four balls."

"How could he?" asked Mary as the chauffeur

paused for a moment to adjust something in the machine.

"Well, he cut the bullet out of the fourth buffalo and used it over again."

"Do you believe that?" whispered Mary.

"I'd like to," I replied.

"Kit used to like to tell stories. All of the big scouts do, I guess," continued the chauffeur. "There was a green fellow named O'Neil out with Kit once. The rule in that camp was that everyone had to bring in meat if he went out for it. So O'Neil agreed, and went off one evening alone on his first hunt. He was crazy to get a buffalo. All the trappers watched him go and wondered what would happen. By and by they heard a shot and then they saw O'Neil, headed for camp, hatless, and gunless, with a big bull after him. They were both going full speed and O'Neil was yelling, 'Here we come, by jabers, stop us! For the love of Heaven, stop us.' They got among the tents and O'Neil tripped over a rope and upset himself into the camp supper. All the rest was laughing so that maybe the old bull would have got off. But Kit jumped for his rifle and shot it. 'Sure,' says O'Neil, 'it's the mate I've brought into camp. No one said if it should be alive or dead.' "

"I shouldn't have thought a man could run faster than a buffalo," commented the Doctor.

"They are heavy beasts, and the bulls are great fighters when they are wounded or maddened, but they aren't so swift," replied our chauffeur.

"Tell us some more," begged Dave.

"There was a fellow named Williams had an adventure with a grizzly once. He was coming down the Arkansas alone, his party having been destroyed by Indians. He used to sleep in his canoe so as to be ready to get away quick without any noise. One night he was dozing off after his first good supper for many days, for he had killed a beaver. Some of the meat was still in the canoe. Suddenly he heard a lot of noise. Injuns was his first thought but he was experienced enough to know that they don't announce themselves. Then he saw a huge grizzly bear sniffing around on the bank and finally get into the water and start to swim toward the canoe which was floating about twenty feet from shore attached by a rope. Williams grabbed his axe and waited. Presently the grizzly came up close, evidently after the beaver, and put his paws on the gunnel of the canoe, almost tipping it over. Down came the axe on his paws, first on one, then on t'other and finally on the bear's head. Then he grunted and let go. But he left his claws behind him and Williams kept 'em as a souvenir.

"And now I guess I'd better attend to business for we're coming near the cañon of the Rio Grande."

The road had been growing wilder, with deep fissures in the ground worn by spring freshets. Then all of a sudden, as it seemed, we were looking down into a great hole in the ground, with the Rio Grande far below. The high rocky banks were wild and

steep and it seemed impossible that any living creature could get down in an automobile.

"Do we go down there!" exclaimed Mary, as Trix clung to me without speaking.

"If you want to catch your train, we do," commented the chauffeur, "for we haven't time to go around it."

The road was good, but narrow and wound along the face of the rock without any protecting wall on the steep side.

Suddenly Trix called out, "There's a wagon coming!"

Sure enough, we could see below us four toiling horses dragging a heavy cart and accompanied by several men. Our chauffeur honked vigorously and finally attracted their attention.

"How can we ever pass?" asked Mary.

"Don't be troubling your head. There's places to pass. You don't suppose we'd have to brush 'em off, do you?"

Sure enough, another turn brought in sight a rounded out place in the bank and there the approaching team was waiting for us.

"I'd hate to go over this road in the dark," I remarked. "But I suppose no one ever does."

We waved to the Mexican drivers as we slowly passed them and departed on our way. We looked back and watched them going upward, apparently clinging to the wild rocky precipice.

"It is like the stone age before there was any vegetation," said the Doctor.

"It ought to be inhabited by the last man, after the earth is dead and growing cold," I answered. "Think of this with the addition of Indians. I suppose this road was made over an old trail."

"Maybe so," said the Doctor, "but I guess there wasn't much traffic before the engineers came and cut into the rocks."

There was a bridge at the bottom over the swift flowing river, and then we began what seemed like an impossible climb. The road disappeared at the edge of precipices and made sudden turns in the most unexpected places. It was wonderful, but dreary and wild. Mary and Dave discovered a great stone face in the rocks. It was not so perfect as the one in the White Mountains, but really fine in feature, watching there in the wilderness.

This too was soon passed and we turned to take a last look at the cañon we had left. When we reached the top, the river and the deep gorge had all vanished as though they had not been.

"Just what and who was Kit Carson, Mother?" whispered Mary as we drove along. The Doctor heard her.

"He lived in the early part of the nineteenth century and spent his time in Taos when he wasn't in the saddle, which wasn't very often. He started being scout and trapper at the early age of seventeen. He went west with Frémont and guided numberless parties of soldiers and traders on the plains or on the old Santa Fé Trail. He was absolutely fearless and apparently untiring. He knew the

Indian language and was a great friend of some of the tribes, especially in his young days. He was always having hair-breadth escapes and carrying messages from army post to army post. He was a wonderful shot, as Mr. Fenton has just told you. There were other famous scouts, but I think Carson was about the finest of them. Do you remember hearing me tell you how I went to see Cody, in New York once, in his famous Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show? Cody was another of the early scouts but of course of a later date than Carson. He used to have an old stage coach in his show that had really been used in the West. He had a running fight between Indians and the coach in the arena.

"I must tell you one funny thing that happened in that connection. There was a man who lived in New York and manufactured boxes. He was a great joker and advertised his business in lots of funny ways. Cody asked him to ride in the 'Deadwood coach,' as he called his stage, and take part in the show. The man agreed, and one fine night acted as passenger. But Cody had told his Indians and cowboys he was a famous hold-up man himself. 'Go as far as you like' was his last word to them as they went into action. That was enough for them. When it came to the hold-up part, they did it in real earnest, cleaned out Mr. Joker's pockets, which happened to be full, and wouldn't give it back afterward."

"Cody was a great hand to josh," observed Fenton, our chauffeur. "Did you ever hear how he

fooled the army officer?" Without waiting for a reply he continued: "He had rode out of camp one day on his famous horse Brigham. He didn't have no saddle or bridle, just a halter. He looked kind of cheap. Well, he saw some buffalo at the same time that a group of army officers from the fort came after them.

"They told him he'd better give up as he would never catch buffalo with that outfit. 'We only want the tenderloin and tongue,' said they. 'You follow us and we'll give you what's left.' Cody grinned and said all right. But he had noticed that the buffalo were headed towards the right for the stream to drink, so he rode off to one side to catch 'em before they got there. Then he gave his horse the rein. Now Brigham knew as much as his old Mormon namesake and more too about buffalo hunting. He carried his master right up close to each buffalo in turn so that Cody bagged the whole eleven buffaloes with twelve shots. Then he jumped off his horse which stood at attention and presented his bag to the army officers, who acknowledged they'd never seen the like before. Cody told them that Brigham would always give his master two shots at a buffalo, but if the second shot didn't kill, he would go on as if disgusted. Cody killed nearly five thousand buffalo in less than eighteen months, all of which were ate by twelve hundred men engaged in track laying.

"Well, here's your station and it's half an hour to train time. You can write Mr. Ransome that I got you here safe and sound and on time."

We parted with our friendly and efficient chauffeur with great regret. It had been a marvelous drive and the little station that represented civilization lured us not at all.

We had brought sandwiches with us and sat on the station platform to eat them while we watched a gang of swarthy Mexicans at work on the tracks. There were some funny shops with all sorts of things to buy in them and a small restaurant where our chauffeur had told us we would get good coffee. As the Doctor was the only one in our party who took coffee, that did not tempt us, but we entered to see what else the place might hold. It was absolutely clean and a nice motherly looking woman waited on us. We found an endless variety of crackers, bottled stuff, and also some dreadful looking candy which Dave wanted to buy. But there was good milk also to be had, and this with crackers and sweet chocolate finished our meal, begun on the platform.

Presently the narrow-gauge train came puffing in and we got aboard. It was very hot, now that we had descended from the heights, and even the wonderful views of the cañon as we went along failed to comfort us.

The train stopped for an hour at another station while the passengers and train crew had lunch. We, having eaten, wandered about and discovered some beautiful varieties of cactus. These had long spiny stems with lovely, waxen flowers. We gathered some but found that even the flowers had "prickers," as Trixy bewailed, when she got her hand full of them.

As we went south the country grew more and more barren, with great table-like hills rising straight out of the plains.

"Why do they call them mesas, Dad?" asked Dave.

"Mesa is the Spanish for table," answered the Doctor. "Just think what a wonderful fort it makes. If a tribe lived on top, it would be almost impossible for an enemy to reach them except through treachery. Of course they had concealed paths, but these could easily be guarded."

"Did the Indians really live on top?" asked Mary.

"Certainly they did, in some places. In others they lived in caves in the rocks; cliff dwellers, they are called. The poor fellows had to have strange places to live in order to protect themselves from all sorts of enemies."

There were so many of the great mesas on either side of us now, that it seemed as if we were going through a land of forts, built by hand. It was almost impossible to believe that like Topsy, "they had just grow'd."

We tried to get some fresh air on the back platform of the car, the Doctor and I sitting on the steps. There were strange colors in the sands and the cactus and sage. It was beginning to look like the south in earnest. At one station we saw a Mexican dandy in his fancy costume—the tight trousers with shiny buttons, the great broad-brimmed sombrero with its sugar loaf crown. At the same place we bought some of the black Indian pottery from an old squaw dressed chiefly in a blanket.

"She doesn't look nearly so nice as the Taos Indians," whispered Mary, as she made her purchases.

"She may be just as nice but she isn't as good looking," murmured the Doctor. "The Taos Pueblo Indians are famous for their fine features and good carriage. They are aware of it, too. Don't you remember how Mateo would not eat with the Mexicans?"

"Yes—that seemed funny. I wonder why it is that people are willing to do almost anything with another person, but won't eat with them?"

"The sentence is a bit involved and I don't believe you could parse it, but I think I get your meaning, Mary," remarked her father. "Didn't you study the *Merchant of Venice* at school last winter? Do you happen to remember that Shylock says:

"I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk with you; but I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you."

"Does that give you any answer to your question, the linking together of eating, drinking and praying?"

"Well, the Jews had laws about their food and had to eat separate," said Mary slowly.

"That's true, too. But ever since the beginning of things there has been a sort of feeling that to eat with a person, to break bread with him, was a sort of ceremony of friendship, almost a religious ceremony. This is brought out clearly by Christ in his last supper with the disciples. But the custom is much older than that, particularly among eastern

peoples. I think that we all inherit a little of this feeling, so that we hesitate to eat with people whom we dislike or look down on. I am sorry to say that the food poisoner of the Middle Ages appeared to forget this ancient custom of holding 'him as one without a fault who breaks my bread and tastes my salt.' Just as the modern woman does who goes to a friend's house to dinner and makes fun of the food and the hostess after she's gone home.

"Well, here we are at Santa Fé, the end of the trail for the brave scouts and traders of the olden days"

The train puffed into the pleasant little station and everyone was glad to get out of the stuffy hot car.

Trix was greatly excited at going to her first real hotel, although the quaint building, with its broad piazzas and high ceilings and lack of elevators, made it seem more like a home than a hotel.

We put our heads out of the auto to see the old Spanish governor's palace as we passed on the way. It was not great and impressive as a building, at least on the outside. But the long row of columns looked interesting and we caught a glimpse of a garden in the court which we could just see over the side walls.

Food and baths seemed to be the things we wanted most, when we took a vote as to what we would do first. So we decided to put off any sight seeing till tomorrow. It was rather pleasant on the whole to get back to some of the luxuries of civilization.

And late in the evening, when the three children were safely tucked in bed, the Doctor and I wandered out into the square and ate a very modern dish of ice-cream as we gazed on the centuries old palace of the ancient Spanish governors, and bought some picture postcards to send back to our friends of the summer.

CHAPTER XVII

WHERE THE OLD AND THE NEW WORLD MEET

AS we wandered out into the square the next morning, armed with cameras and eager for souvenirs, we met some friends from the east who were spending a year in Santa Fé. Mr. and Mrs. Gorton welcomed us with enthusiasm and immediately told us that we must see the museum, and the palace, and the cathedral, and the shops, and drive out to the cliff dwellers and spend a night or two at Puyé or Rito.

"You are planning a month of hard labor for us," objected the Doctor. "We are only to be here a week."

"Why, you can see a lot in a week. But you must be sure to visit some of the cliff dwellings," said Mr. Gorton. "I expect to start out with a friend tomorrow for a couple of days and we could easily take you and the two older children. Mrs. Gorton and Philip would be glad to look after the little one."

"I want to go too," said Trixy.

"What is your name?" asked Mrs. Gorton, in a friendly way, of Trix. "I think my little boy is

about your age. He has the funniest little burro—gray donkey, that you ever saw. I know he would love to take you for a drive with his burro.”

“When, now?” asked Trix. “Will Mother go too?”

“No, your mother and father are going for a long drive in an automobile with Mr. Gorton and you are coming with me to see Philip and the burro, tomorrow.”

“Can’t I come now?”

“Don’t you want to see the palace, Trix?” I asked. “You come with us today. Perhaps we can find the Indian doll I promised you in one of the shops.”

“Is Trix your name?” asked Mrs. Gorton. “You go with your mother to see the shops this morning and this afternoon when they go to the stupid old palace, you come with me to see Phil and get acquainted.”

“May I, Mother?” asked Trix.

“Well,” I said, “this may be the land of *Mañana*—of putting off what you can, but surely never were innocent travelers taken possession of more promptly and speedily. We really can’t let you do all this for us. Give us time to think it over.”

“We’d love to have her,” answered Mrs. Gorton. “Phil is crazy about children and we have a most dependable Indian nurse.”

“You may never have another such chance for a personally conducted tour by a prominent citizen and an English archæologist,” added Mr. Gorton. “I’ll come in after lunch and we’ll talk it over.”

Trix was trying to attract my attention and finally whispered. "Ask them where we can find an Indian doll."

"I don't think there are any, Trixy," I said, "but I'll ask the Gortons."

"No, not a real one. You can get a small papoose doll made by Montgomery, Roebuck and Company—very nice—but the Indians keep their dolls to themselves."

Dave burst in with, "Don't you remember how Mr. Esty told us how the man tried to buy a doll from the Indians and nearly got killed?"

"Why of course, I remember now," said his father. "But what is the best store for souvenirs—where you can get something worth while, but don't have to leave all your worldly goods behind?"

"There are several good stores. There is one down on the main street from the railroad, the biggest one and kept by a famous old fellow. He has the greatest variety; good stuff and a lot of cheap little things that youngsters like. Then there's an excellent but expensive place, kept by a wonderful gray-haired Mexican gentleman of the old-fashioned cavalier type. Oh, there are lots of stores. But they are all close together; you can't miss them. You must be sure to give plenty of time to the palace and the museum." We assured him that we intended to.

"We will come to the hotel for Trix this afternoon, so you can really get some good sight seeing. Remember you'll have to start bright and early tomorrow to get to our cliff dwellers. Adios—"

With a wave of his hat Mr. Gorton departed, accompanied by his wife, and we strolled along to make our purchases, and to talk over Mr. Gorton's plan.

"How can we leave Trix for two days with strangers?" I asked. "And we couldn't take her with us on such a trip."

"We'll see how she gets on this afternoon," responded the Doctor. "I believe she'll be perfectly happy once we are gone. And suppose she misses you a little? It won't hurt her permanently. This is really a wonderful opportunity."

"We must, Mother," said Mary. "We just must go."

"Well, we will think it over," I answered. "Why shouldn't I stay behind with Trix?"

"If you don't go, we won't go," said the Doctor in his firmest professional manner.

The large store described by Mr. Gorton was easily found. It certainly contained everything that anyone could want—long priestly robes of great beauty and value; more or less modern "chaps" or cowboy trousers; some handsome rings and jewelry and some cheap trinkets; but Trix discovered a veritable treasure. On a huge flat table were innumerable images of clay, both small and great beasts, human and from the animal kingdom—they were of all sorts and kinds. And wonder of wonders, they were cheap, quite within the allowance of the children. So the Doctor and I prepared to settle down for the morning to the business of selection.

Mary, however, soon found what she wanted and went back to the rings. There were some pretty silver things made by the Indians which she wanted to take home to friends.

"Haven't you had enough rings, Mary?" asked the Doctor. "I don't want to see any more for the present."

"Now, Dad, you know you will be the first to look at it when we get home. I wonder if it's there now?"

"I haven't heard yet. There may be a letter while we are here. I asked the bank to write of its receipt."

After a while when the allowances were spent, and even the sums which the Doctor added had gone, we left the great barn-like store with its fascinating objects and its delightful Mexican proprietor, and wandered about the streets of old Santa Fé. It was hard to believe in the history as we walked past shops and moving picture theatres and ice-cream parlors. But when at last we reached the square, or plaza, and sat down in the park, our backs resolutely turned away from the shopping district, it was possible to dream of the past as we looked at the old, old palace of the Spanish governors.

"Think of all the beautiful ladies with mantillas thrown over their heads, and all the handsome caballeros with clanking swords," said the Doctor. "I can just picture them walking along back of those columns in the arcade of the palace."

"You wouldn't have seen many beautiful ladies

walking there," I objected. "They might have peeked out of the windows at you. But they certainly did not walk on the streets."

"O yes they did, my dear, if they were anything like the ladies in old Mexico. Of course they could not walk with the caballeros, but they used to walk in opposing columns, so to speak; the ladies in one direction and the men in another, and did their wooing by glances and smiles and possibly surreptitious notes as they passed each other. Then afterwards the ladies sat behind the bars while the gentlemen who wished to woo came around every day and 'played bear,' as they call it, walking back and forth solemnly but hoping to catch a favoring glance from the eyes of the lady who sat like a caged animal at the zoo."

"I am hungry," observed Trixy. "Can't we have something to eat?"

"Isn't it nearly lunch time? Can't we go back to the hotel?" asked Dave.

"Can't we go over and get a sundae? You and Mother went out last night and got one!" suggested Mary.

The Doctor looked at his watch. "There is over an hour before lunch. Yes, you can go over to that ice-cream place that you can see by turning your back on the palace and looking in the opposite direction. Here is a dollar. Bring me back the change."

"Take Trixy, and be sure she only has plain vanilla," I added.

So the three departed and we sat and dreamed

in front of the palace. I am not sure that one of us didn't actually doze. For suddenly the Doctor got up with a start.

"Haven't those children been gone a long time?" he said. He stood looking around but could see no children that resembled ours. The Doctor consulted his watch. "They have been gone nearly three-quarters of an hour," he remarked. "I think I'll walk over to the store. You had better stay here in case they turn up."

Presently he returned without them. He found the ice-cream parlor that they had been in, for the clerk remembered them. They had been gone for some time, he told the Doctor.

"Where can they be?" I said. "Could they have gone back to the hotel?"

The Doctor thought not.

"Most likely they've gone into some store hunting souvenirs. But I think I'd better see if I can find them. I don't know whether they know the name of the hotel. You had better wait. If they do come back here, some one should be here to scold them." He went off rapidly while I walked around my side of the square, watching eagerly for the late ones. I tried to figure out where they could be.

What, I thought, could have happened to three healthy, normal children on an open square in broad daylight? Mary is too big to be picked up and carried off. If they wandered away onto a side street, they could not fail to find the Plaza in a short time. An earthquake could not have swallowed

them. What could they have gotten into? What mischief? Like a flash it came to me. Mischief! Somewhere, those three young imps were hiding, waiting to be found. Perhaps they had come back softly and had discovered us day-dreaming. What an opportunity!

Where could they be? What matter? I knew Trix and Dave well enough to be sure that if I waited quietly they would come. The strain of long hiding would be too great.

Then another idea flashed into my head. I walked quickly across the street as though tired of waiting and then halted behind one of the many swinging glass doors that led into the palace. Here I could command a view of the park and the bench where we had been sitting. I hoped that the Doctor would not return first, to find us all gone. I waited. Presently I poked my head out of the door so as to look up and down the arcade in front of the palace. At precisely that moment a small curly red-haired person poked her head out of a neighboring door and our eyes met. There was a squeal. I walked quietly down to the next door just as the three children emerged.

"We have been looking for you all over," began Dave. "We thought you might be in here."

"Where's Dad?" asked Trix, gurgling with delight.

"He has gone to get a policeman," I answered solemnly.

"Why a policeman?" said Dave.

"Because children who run away in Santa Fé are always arrested," I replied.

"You are just fooling, Mother," said Dave.

"You wait and see."

"I guess we'll have to wait a long time," scoffed Mary. At that moment, much to my amazement and secret joy, I beheld the Doctor approaching with a man in uniform.

"Didn't I tell you?" I asked.

Dave looked startled. Trix flew across the street to meet her father. Evidently the policeman meant nothing to her.

Mary said in an indignant tone, "Mother, what is Dad going to do?"

"O, I don't know," I answered quietly. "You will hear in a moment. Probably he will thank the policeman kindly and send him back where he belongs, now that you children have appeared."

"Were you really scared, Mother?" Mary asked, a little troubled.

I did not answer and we crossed the street to join the little group on the opposite side. For the Doctor and his uniformed companion had stopped when Trix ran up to them. The policeman moved away just as we approached.

"Where did you find them?" asked the Doctor sharply. "Where have they been?"

"I fancy they have been playing hide and seek with their parents," I replied.

"I am sorry I sent away the policeman," said the Doctor. "Whose bright idea was it?"

"Do you mean the hide or the seek?" I asked. "I imagine Mary thought it would be fun to hide and surprise us. How long were you going to stay in that doorway, anyway?" I asked.

"Well," began Mary, "we came back and found you both dozing and we thought it would be fun to hide. When Dad went off, I wanted to come out. Then Mother went off somewhere. First we thought she'd seen us. Then it wasn't any more fun because you both were gone. Then Trix looked out and there was Mother close beside us. We're sorry if you were really worried."

"Humph," remarked her father. "I thought you were old enough to be trusted to go across a square and back again. We know now you're not."

"You were asleep and we thought it would be fun to hide," said Trix.

"I was not asleep," said the Doctor, "and I thought bringing a policeman would scare you out of your hiding place."

"Did you know we were hiding?" asked Dave, in some disappointment.

"It's a funny kind of a hide and seek game when everybody hides and nobody is It," observed Trixy.

"I am not sure who was It," remarked Mary.

"Neither am I; let's go home to lunch," said the Doctor. But there was a certain coolness in the air and no one spoke for a few minutes. Then suddenly I heard the Doctor chuckle and before we knew it we were all laughing loudly.

Trixy was the noisiest of all, only interrupting

herself once to whisper, "What are you laughing at, Mother?"

It was nearly three o'clock when word was sent up that Mr. Gorton wished to see us. We all went down and found him on the porch. On the street in front of the hotel was a small wagon attached to the prettiest toy of a gray burro that one could imagine. Trix stood spellbound for a moment and then ran down to embrace her new four-footed friend. In the wagonet sat Philip, the seven-year-old son of Mr. Gorton. The boy invited Trix to sit beside him and then called for his father.

"Coming in a moment, son," was the reply. Then he turned to us. "Will you folks be ready to start at eight o'clock sharp tomorrow? We'll be here for you with the car."

"Would you mind telling us just what is involved, Gorton?" asked the Doctor.

"O, you scientific people! Well, this is what is involved. You four put on old clothes and find some blankets, etc. We will take the food and cooking utensils. We start at eight in the car and go to Puyé, where there are some interesting cliff dwelling towns; also excavated villages on top of the mesa. We spend the night in a cave dwelling and proceed to the Rito de los Frijoles, where there are more cliff dwellings. There we spend a night in a hostelry and return the next day to Santa Fé. In the meanwhile Trix will sleep with the burro and the rabbits and have a wonderful time even if she does not get to Puyé, the land of many cotton tails."

"But why doesn't Mrs. Gorton go?" I asked.

"Because, dear lady, she has been before, and at present thinks she cannot leave our teething two-year-old. Yes, Phil, I'm coming. Now please don't say any more. This is the chance of a lifetime, to go with some one like me and some one like Mr. Ark-right, the eminent English archæologist. Will you go?"

"O, Mother, yes, say yes!" whispered Mary. I looked at the Doctor. There was a moment's silence, then Mary exclaimed, "Of course, we're going, Mr. Gorton. We couldn't not go!"

"All right then, tomorrow at eight sharp. Trix will be safe and happy with us. Phil will be over with the burro just before us in the morning, so she'll leave you, not you her. By the way, don't forget to go into the gardens of the palace and visit the Indian pottery maker there with his family. Hasta Mañana!"

He called this as he ran down the steps and joined the two in the wagonet.

"I wish I could have gone with them. I never saw anything so cunning as that donkey," said Dave.

"He certainly is pretty. Wouldn't it be fun to take one home with us," suggested the Doctor.

"O, Dad, could we?" asked Mary.

"I am afraid they wouldn't transplant very easily. Well, let's forget about modern things and try to think ourselves back into old Spanish Santa Fé, when the conquistadores were here."

CHAPTER XVIII

AN OLD-FASHIONED BANDIT

WE wandered through the palace rooms. Many of them were devoted to models of the excavations among the pueblos and cliff villages. The walls of these rooms were decorated with pictures of the Indian towns as they had been in their ancient glory.

"Why, Mother, they had rooms built out in front with porches," said Mary. "I thought the cliff dwellers just lived in caves like prehistoric wild men."

"No indeed," said the Doctor. "These house-building Indians had an interesting and highly civilized village life before the Spaniards got here. They had great villages, built either like the pueblos in Taos, or in the cliffs, whichever was most convenient and protected them best against their enemies. They were in general peace loving and industrious, and the Spaniards, popular legend to the contrary, were sensible enough to leave them in possession of the ancestral homes and customs. They sent missionaries of course. The Pueblos are supposed to be good Catholics. But they manage to

combine it with the tribal worship. They had one serious outburst in the seventeenth century and for ten years were in possession of this old palace. They massacred the poor, kindly mission priests and generally raised Cain. But this did not last long. I think they gave in after about ten years. The Spaniards were in possession until Uncle Sam walked in. But these Indians still own their land by the old Spanish grants and do not live on government reservations, as so many of the western tribes do; the Apaches, for instance, and the Navajos."

"See, Dad, there's a list of all the men from New Mexico who were in the war," said Dave, whose interest had wandered. We had gone from the Indians' rooms, past the cabinets of Spanish curios, and were now standing before the list of modern heroes.

"Such curious names," said Mary. "Indian and Mexican and all sorts."

"I can never get over the wonder of it," I murmured. "To think of their all going, just because it was the law. It is wonderful."

"Isn't there a dungeon in the palace?" asked Dave.

"There used to be horrible places," answered his father. "When the Americans took over the town they found prisons with locks of hair sticking to the walls and all sorts of ghastly writings, done in blood."

"O Dad, what fun! Can't we see them?"

"I think they have all been done over, or white-washed or something. Let's go out into the garden.

I am sure I can imagine pleasanter scenes out there."

The grassy court with its shrubs and flowers was most attractive. We wandered about and presently saw through a window an Indian at work on some pottery.

"This must be the man we were told to find," I said.

"Can we go in?" asked Dave.

"Do you think it will be all right, Mother?" said Mary.

The Doctor opened the door nearest the window and we found ourselves looking into a small room in which were an Indian and his wife. From the ceiling hung a basket cradle containing a baby.

There were some fine specimens of pottery and Mary and her father soon found several pieces to buy. The Indian was calmly friendly, but his wife was moved to smile when Dave and I admired the swinging baby. We watched the man coloring some of the pieces. He was certainly an artist. It was a pleasant glimpse of family life, where the hearth and the work shop lived together in one room.

We visited the museum and admired the pictures and the great chapel restored to represent the Spanish mission churches. Over it hung the ancient mission bell which we wished could have rung out the story of its life.

"After all, it's not old like Egypt," observed Mary, who had been studying ancient history.

"No. Even the cliff dwellings are probably not

more than two thousand years old. But that is further back than most people think American history goes."

We came out into the square as the sun was getting low. The sky was of the clear robin's-egg blue that is so common in the southwest and so much clearer than anywhere else. The white walls of the old church tower fairly shone against it.

"I wish I had my bicycle," observed Dave. "These flat streets would be great to ride on."

"I wish I had Jim Snort here. O Daddy, look at that adorable cow pony! And look at that beautiful creature on his back!"—this from Mary. It was indeed a most impressive sight to see the Mexican dandy, dressed for shine and show, spurred and jingling, his broad sombrero on his head, a cigarette in his mouth.

"Do you suppose he is a bandit?" asked Dave.

"Probably not," answered his father.

We noticed, however, that the Mexican attracted considerable attention from others beside ourselves.

We heard that evening that a celebrated bandit, half Mexican, half Chinese, called El Lobo, had indeed ridden boldly through the streets of Santa Fé, quite unmolested.

I did not sleep well that night. My dreams were disturbed by snatches of adventures in which Trix was beset by dangers of all descriptions. Fire, snakes, bandits, even burros and fierce rabbits attacked her. It was with many inward qualms that I got her ready for her visit next morning. I ex-

plained all her possible wants and troubles to Mrs. Gorton, who did not seem at all appalled at the responsibility.

"My dear, she has a full set of teeth, so why worry about her," were the parting words, as they drove off. It was a pretty sight. Mrs. Gorton, small and dark haired, with a gay frilly gown; Phil as dark as his mother, with brown eyes and close cut black hair; and Trix, her red curls and blue eyes shining in the sunlight. She had given me a hasty kiss and then had run to embrace the burro. The Doctor linked his arm in mine.

"You will miss her a great deal more than she will you," he observed.

Shortly after Mr. Gorton arrived in a big, comfortable touring car. At his side sat the kind of Englishman I had always wanted to meet. He was tall and fair and pink-cheeked, with a single glass in his eye—a real monocle—and was dressed in a regulation gray sport suit of knickerbockers, golf stockings and a Norfolk jacket. He sprang out and opened the door for us while Mr. Gorton, who wore khaki, introduced us informally. We four piled ourselves and our things into the back of the car, and then we were off.

It was a brilliant morning with the special kind of sunlight that is made only in New Mexico. On the road we met several loads of wood traveling into the town, accompanied by picturesque Mexicans. We could hardly believe that a burro was hidden under the wood and actually moving it. But when

our attention was called, we did see a small head and four small feet apparently growing out of the brush.

"I am going to call those donkeys the Brush Wood Boys," said Mary. We all laughed except Mr. Gorton's archæologist, who asked us "to tell him the joke."

"Did you see El Lobo yesterday afternoon, Mr. Gorton?" asked Dave, leaning over to the front seat.

"No, where? Did you?"

"He rode right through the streets of Santa Fé," broke in Mary, "with all his beautiful clothes and pistols and things."

"And such a bully pony," added Dave.

"Did anyone arrest him?" asked the Englishman, whose name was Arkright.

"O no, we are very proud of El Lobo. He is the pet Bad Man of New Mexico," said Mr. Gorton.

"But isn't he dangerous?" asked Mr. Arkright.

"Not to natives. He gets his haul down in Old Mexico and then comes up here to spend it and generally show off. Why, he is our 'Favorite Son'."

"He is awfully handsome," remarked Mary. "I love his pony and the way he rides."

"Well, I'd just as soon his pony would carry him away from us," I said.

It was a strange, desolate sort of country we were passing through. In spite of the picturesque beauty of it, I missed the little intimate scenes we were used to in New England.

"If you think this is desolate, I wish you could see Acoma and the Enchanted Mesa," observed Mr. Gorton. "Or Tabira, and the lost cities."

"That sounds good! What are they?" asked Dave.

"Wait till we sit around the camp fire tonight, in the cliff city. Then I will tell you all about them."

There were quantities of little pines and scrub oaks but few big trees, and the sand was everywhere about us. We met an occasional Mexican with his big sombrero, and some Indians, wrapped in blankets on their calico ponies. Once or twice an auto passed us. But we had the road chiefly to ourselves.

Suddenly, however, there was a cloud of dust and in it a car going at mad speed. It stopped just before we met, and the driver called to us.

"There's been a hold-up of the limited train."

"If we see any bandits we'll bring 'em along," answered Mr. Gorton, laughing.

"It's true, you fool," said the other driver. "El Lobo stopped the 'Overland' just west of Santa Fé and got a pile of loot. A car full of money was coming down to the railroad agent here at Santa Fé."

The auto drove off at breakneck speed, while Mr. Gorton observed that he'd be "jiggered."

"The man had been drinking, had he not?" asked Mr. Arkright solemnly.

"I guess it's true all right," answered Mr. Gorton.

"O, let's go back and hear all about it," cried Dave.

"It will keep for two days," observed the Doctor. "We will probably never hear the last of it. But it does seem as though our friend El Lobo was pretty bold."

"He's just like Arsène Lupin," exclaimed Mary, delightedly. "Think of holding up a train in broad daylight. Do you suppose he did it alone?"

"Well, no," answered Mr. Gorton, "I rather expect he had a gang with him to pull off as big a job as that. He probably had some pious Penitentes. We haven't had a train hold-up for a long time in this neighborhood. The last time was at night and they derailed the engine. I am quite anxious to know how El Lobo managed this."

"Maybe he is the Lone Wolf come to life," suggested Dave.

"Doesn't Lobo mean wolf?"

"Sure enough."

"But surely the authorities will arrest him," said Mr. Arkright. "Such a man cannot be allowed at liberty."

"The railroad officials will be after him, too. They can't afford to lose all that money."

"I wonder how he did it," said Mary, while from Dave's silence we judged he was figuring out in his own mind all the thrilling details.

It was a thirty mile drive from Santa Fé to Puyé. We were hot and dusty and hungry when Mr. Gorton finally pointed out to us the great rocky mesa with its ruins on top and its cliff dwellings at the side. It was an impressive sight, and almost

impossible to believe that such a natural fortress could be built without the help of men.

"It is like an old-fashioned fort," said the Doctor. "Wonderful!"

"O, but you should see Acoma and the Enchanted Mesa. It is much bigger and the desert about it gives an even more impressive appearance."

"This is big enough for me," observed the Doctor.

"And quite wild enough," I added.

We settled down for lunch under the shadows of the great cliff. Our host had brought a bountiful supply and we cooked over an open fire. Mr. Ark-right had a folding knife and fork of his own which he assured us he always carried with him, also a spoon and cup. After we had eaten and removed the traces of our feast, a "siesta," as Mr. Gorton observed "was enjoyed by all." Indeed, the heat and the long ride and our early morning start made us all sleepy and disinclined to move.

But Dave and Mary could not long be kept quiet and presently they went off exploring. They came back in a short time to announce that they had found a path that led to a ladder that led to a cliff room, and could they go up?

"I think we'll all go up," replied Mr. Gorton. "We will select our night's lodging now, and then can go on to the top and eat our supper there without the necessity of hurrying down to pick out a camping place at dusk."

We followed the children to the path, made by centuries of passing and repassing feet.

"I have never seen a trail worn down as deep as this," said the Doctor. Mr. Arkright was delighted and felt of the rocky sides as we went along. Indeed we were all much impressed and I was glad that a summer of riding and climbing had given me the ability to get up the steep cliff. Finally we hoisted ourselves up the rude ladders that led into the cliff dwellings. The rooms themselves were not large and apparently were hollowed out of the soft rock. We could go from some of them to others through low doorways. There were several stories. Some of the rooms had been built out against the face of the cliff. We could see the holes in the walls where the beams for the upper stories had rested. The hollowed out rooms were at the back of the houses.

Mary and Dave went in as far as possible through the back rooms, and suddenly a cry of "Dad, come here," arose. We all marched after the children, who were much excited over finding the remains of a recent camp fire.

Then Mary discovered some rudely scratched drawings on the wall. "Do you suppose anyone saw this before?" she asked.

"I fancy so. The ruins have been searched pretty thoroughly," answered Mr. Gorton. "These ashes would indicate that someone has been here recently."

"Look, Mother, here is a beast something like the one on Mary's Indian ring," called Dave suddenly.

Over a small hole in the wall, was cut a tiny

image which might with some imagination be said to resemble the jade animal that we had all studied so carefully.

"I wonder where the hole goes to!"

No one could answer this, as the hole was not even large enough to admit of a hand.

We wandered back and soon found a suitable suite of rooms to spend the night. The three men decided to sleep on the first story, while the two children and I selected three rooms above that opened out of each other. We had blankets and a couple of camp cots. These we made ready for the night. The men selected the place where we were to make our fire and we packed in a knapsack enough food for supper. Then we started to climb to the top of the mesa.

"I wish we could have used the big back room where my animal was carved," said Mary.

"I think it's better to be nearer the trail that leads down to the men's rooms," I answered. "That seemed much lonelier and could only be reached by a ladder."

"I liked the looks of it. I don't care if it is lonelier."

"You may care tonight," I answered drily.

CHAPTER XIX

ADVENTURES IN A CLIFF DWELLING

ON top of the mesa were the ruins of a whole village. Of course there were no traces of roofs to the houses, but the separate dwellings and one large central house were plainly to be seen.

We wandered about under Mr. Gorton's direction, picturing the old life of the Indians, which must have been very like what we could see today in the pueblos. There was no excavating being done at that moment and the place was utterly deserted.

"The Indians had their fireplaces near the door," said Mr. Gorton. "They cooked on a stone table over the fire. In the corner would stand the cooking pot with the stone water jar and dipper close by. In another corner of the room would be the boxes containing the raw meal and the necessary things for grinding corn. In another room they would have a large storage vessel for the prepared foods. Above, near the ceiling, would be stretched strings of rawhide on which they hung strips of drying meat or skins. In another room they kept the materials for making their pottery. There are all sorts of different houses—dwellings and a big community house."

"There are two kivas, or ceremonial caves, are there not?" asked Mr. Arkright.

"Yes, cut out of the solid rock. But these are not so large as the ones at the Rito."

We wandered over to the western side of the mesa and sat down to rest and admire the view. The beautiful wooded range of Jemez stretched along the horizon and in the foreground were many small mesas, rising like islands. Dave begged Mr. Gorton for the story of the Enchanted Mesa. Mr. Arkright and the Doctor moved away to examine the old ruins more closely.

"The Mesa 'Encantada' is at Acoma," began Mr. Gorton.

"Where's that?" interrupted Dave.

"Southwest of Albuquerque. It is larger than the one we are on, and stands out from the desert like some huge crouching animal. The legend is that hundreds of years ago there was a village at the top like the other pueblos. But only one path, cut in the side of the cliff, led up from the plains below. Among the Indians who lived there was one who, in the old biblical language, 'did evil in the sight of the Lord.' The medicine man demanded that he should be given up by his people and cast off from the Mesa. But his family did not think that he was bad enough to merit such a punishment, and refused to surrender him, whereupon the medicine men made magic and a great storm arose. Lightning and thunder and hail came down from Heaven. The people were much alarmed, and decided to

send word to the medicine men that the offending Indian would be given up. By and by the storm went down and when the morning came, apparently everything was as it had been before. But alas! the first man who tried to go down to the plains discovered the terrible truth. The storm had split away part of the solid rock, the part with the path on it. There was no way to reach the plains, no way to get food." Mr. Gorton paused.

"What happened?" asked Dave, in great excitement.

"The story goes that they all died. The cliff was inaccessible even to Indians, and there were no aeroplanes in those days."

"But how dreadful to have a whole village starve to death. Is it true?" demanded Mary.

"There was once a village and now there is none. There was once a path and now there is none. That is all we know. But people tell of weird sounds and groanings that are heard in the neighborhood at night."

"It's like the Alhambra stories in Irving's Tales," said Mary.

"The Legend of the Grand Quivira is more like Irving."

"Tell us that! You said you would," said Dave.

"You certainly have insatiable curiosity. I shall call you the elephant child," remarked Mr. Gorton. "Perhaps you have heard that Coronado was sent by his Spanish 'Commandante' to hunt for a mys-

terious New Jerusalem whose streets were paved with gold, called Quivira. Well, he found it in northeastern Kansas after a journey the like of which was never known. He found it. But it was only a wandering tribe of poor Indians who had never even heard of gold.

"Latter day treasure seekers who remembered that Coronado had hunted for a mysterious Eldorado called Quivira, decided that they would hunt for it also. They were not troubled by the fact that Coronado had found it and found it worthless. These new victims of an old legend discovered a great mysterious pueblo, and rechristened it 'the Grand Quivira.' No wonder they thought it a thing of magic, for its bleak unearthly site, its ghostly appearance, its distance from all water, was enough to make it a proper home for legends.

"South of Albuquerque, the narrow valley of the Rio Grande is rimmed on the east by an arid plateau, twenty miles wide; and this in turn is walled by a long range of ten thousand foot mountains. Climbing that rugged barrier, or threading one of its passes, the traveler descends through park-like pineries to the edge of the infinite eastward plains. In the centre of this bare, brown vista gleams a chain of ghastly white salt beds, the Accursed Lakes of Tigua folk-lore. Far southeast and south are spectral peaks and to the farther north the dim blue shadows of the range of Santa Fé.

"Along the smooth, timbered lower slope of the Manzano is a line of ancient pueblo ruins. A little

farther south, are the bones of the three chief cities of the salt plains—Abo, Cuaray, and Tabira. They were cities like Montezuma's 'capital' in old Mexico, though smaller. There was no hint of a metropolis—no palaces, no temples, no splendor. These towns were mere piles of earth and stone—pueblo communities, exactly such as are seen today in Taos, Acoma, Zuni.

"The country here is high, 6,047 feet above sea-level. Access to it is difficult and dreary. The nearest water is thirty miles away and the explorer must carry not only provisions, but water for himself and animals. Mid-ocean is not more lonesome than the plains, nor night so gloomy as that dumb sunlight. It is barren of sound. The brown grass is knee-deep. The bands of antelope that drift, like cloud shadows, across the dun landscape suggest less of life than of the supernatural. The spell of the plains is a wondrous thing. At first it fascinates. Then it bewilders. At last, it crushes. Stronger than hope, reason, will.

"But a mile to the south, where a ridge noses the uncanny valley, stands out a strange ashen bulk that brings us back to earth. Wan and weird as it is, it bespeaks the one-time presence of man, for Nature has no such squareness.

"Stand upon the higher ridges to the east, and it is all spread before you, a ghost in pallid stone—the absolute ghost of a city. Come nearer, and the spell dwindles; but it is never broken. It is a ruined village, but such a village!

"This was the pueblo of Tabira, better known as the 'Gran Quivira.' It was one of the larger pueblos of New Mexico and in its day had perhaps fifteen hundred inhabitants. The walls of the houses have toppled to high rubbish mounds. Only a few rooms of first and second stories, long innocent of roofs, remain. But in the western end of the village, just on the brow of the slope that falls away to the strange valley and looks across to the sombre Mesa de los Jumanos, is a gigantic ruin, whose like is not in all our North America. Its walls, thirty feet high and six feet thick, roofless and ragged at the top, two hundred and two feet front and one hundred and thirty-one feet in greatest depth, are of the spectral bluish-gray limestone, and firmly laid in adobe mortar. The northern part of this bewildering ruin is one huge cross-shaped room, thirty-eight feet wide and one hundred and thirty-one feet long, with an eastward gateway fifteen feet wide and eleven high, under a mighty timber which upholds fifteen feet of massive masonry. South of this enormous room is a honeycomb of chambers of ordinary size, divided by long halls, and with sides still standing to a height of twenty feet. Of these rooms there are a score. It is plain that they had no upper stories, as had the dwellings of the pueblo. There is also a rear entrance from the south to the great room, through a spacious ante-chamber. In one of the apartments of the honeycomb is still a perfect fireplace; and here and there over the vacant doorways are carved wood lintels, their arabesques

softened but not lost in the weathering of centuries. Some of the rafters must have weighed a ton and a half to two tons; and the trees which gave them were at least fifteen miles away.

"It is not the Indians who seek there for gold and treasure, but the Mexicans and the white men. I do not know when the last expedition went down there to burrow down into the earth or drill through the bed rock. There may be some adventurers there now. It is quite unsafe to wander about after dark there on account of the holes that have been mined by many treasure seekers. But the 'paisano' will tell you that it is not safe for other reasons. Weird sounds are heard after dark. Once a shepherd leaning against a rock was surprised to find the boulder slip out from under him and disclose a mysterious passage lined with gold ingots. Another Mexican saw a huge white snake creep out of the dark, that offered to show him the way to a treasure trove. White men have discovered old maps that show where gold and jewels were once hidden. There is only one thing these stories have in common—nobody has ever had the nerve to follow the snake or the map or the spectre to the spot where the treasure was hidden. No one has ever taken it away. Therefore if it ever was there, it is there now, ready for you, Dave, or you, Mary, to find and carry away."

"That's a great yarn," remarked the Doctor, who had joined us. "I wish we had time to go down there and look it up. But we will have to put that

trip off. Maybe Mary's Indian ring would guide us to the treasure."

"What's Mary's Indian ring?" asked Mr. Gorton. The Doctor told him briefly.

"Why, that's some adventure," said Mr. Gorton.

"Maybe you could find a treasure hidden in the rocks down below here where you found the animal carved, if you went at midnight with your ring to help you."

"I'd like to try it," said Dave.

"The ring isn't here, and anyway that's nonsense. Mr. Gorton is just fooling," remarked Mary.

"Is the famous sun house here?" asked the Doctor.

"No, that's at Rito, where I hope we'll go tomorrow. There is a very perfectly restored room at the Rito, too, and lots of interesting things to see. Well, I think it's about time to think about supper."

"O, it's so heavenly here. Let's wait a while," I pleaded.

"I certainly do not mind waiting," answered Mr. Gorton. "I am feeling too lazy to move."

So we sat for a while longer, till the sun went down in a dazzling yellow sky, and Mary and Dave groaned with hunger.

"Why, people will think this is the Enchanted Mesa," observed Mr. Gorton, "and that the starving Indians are moaning for their food."

"We may not be Indians, but we are starving," cried Mary.

"It is late," remarked Mr. Arkright, "and we did not have any tea this afternoon."

"We can have some now," said Mr. Gorton.

"Come, children, help us to get wood and we can have supper in no time."

"Can't we have one sandwich without waiting?" begged Dave.

"All right, all right," grumbled Mr. Gorton in pretended disgust. "I see we won't get any work out of you till you're fed."

It had grown very cold and we were all glad of the fire.

"It seems so strange to be here on a picnic," said Mary reflectively, as she munched a bread and bacon sandwich. "I can't quite believe it."

"It will be even harder to believe when the moon comes up shortly and everything is filled with mystery and enchantment," said Mr. Arkright.

"Don't forget to look at midnight for the treasure in the inner room where you found the curious hole and animal picture," remarked Mr. Gorton.

When we had cleared the supper things away, we crossed over to the eastern edge of the cliff and watched the moon rise. The ruins looked huge and weird by the brilliant light. Mr. Gorton sang some strange, soft Mexican and Indian songs till we felt that this was indeed a mesa of enchantment, even though it was called "Puyé," the place of many cotton tails, instead of Acoma. At last, when the children had almost fallen asleep, and even the Doctor was drowsy, we fastened our things together and

started down. Mr. Gorton went ahead, for the steps and ladders seemed more perilous by night.

It really was good to get to our blankets and roll up in them for a well earned night's rest. It must have been about midnight, for the moon was well on its way to the west, when I heard something stirring. I called out, but as no one answered, I took it for granted that a bat had paid me a visit. The cold outer air did not tempt me to look further and I turned over and went to sleep again. If I had arisen and gone to see if the children were all right, as any right-minded mother should, I would have discovered that the birds had flown.

The stories of treasure and rings of mystery had been too much for Dave and Mary. They had arisen softly in the middle of the night, when all the grown folks slept, and had gone quietly down the path till they came to the tufa, or terrace that led to the cave room where we had been that afternoon. There was still enough moonlight left to show them their way, and they went carefully. It was at some little distance from our camping place.

As they approached the ladder up which they must go, they were surprised to see a slight glow coming from the interior room above.

"Someone has lighted a fire there again," whispered Mary, remembering the ashes found there earlier.

"Maybe it's Brigands," whispered Dave. "Let's go back."

They hesitated for a few moments, and then as

they heard nothing and the light appeared to have vanished, they took heart again to proceed.

"I guess it was just moonlight. I don't hear a sound," whispered Mary.

"Let's go up very softly and see," said Dave.

Their bare feet made no sound on the ladder and presently they were up. It was then that they first heard low, murmuring voices coming from the inner room and saw a flickering yellow light from a torch or a fire.

There was an outer room opening on the terrace, and two inner rooms with doors between. The third room was at the right of the other two, and had no outer opening. It was in this inner chamber that Mary had found the hole in the wall that afternoon.

"Let's go back," said Mary. "I'm scared."

"I want to see what it is," whispered Dave. "We could just peep in without making any noise and see."

"All right—but I'm scared."

Dave crept into the outer room, making no sound, and Mary followed reluctantly. "She was older and had more sense," observed their father when he heard their story. Once inside they could distinguish soft Spanish words, spoken in whispers.

Finally they went to the doorway of the second room, from which they could get a glimpse of part of the interior chamber. There sat the Mexican bandit they had seen riding through Santa Fé the day before, still in his fancy clothes. With him were two swarthy ragged rascals. On the floor were

sacks and strong boxes, papers, money and all sorts of things, evidently the spoil from the limited train. The men were so busy that they didn't even look up.

"If we only understood Spanish," thought Dave.

They watched the men spellbound. Finally the leader got up and went back out of sight, holding in his hand a bag of money. He came back a few minutes after and the bag was gone. Mary and Dave looked at each other and then as with common consent, they turned and crept away.

"We must get help," whispered Mary, when they were safely out of hearing and down the ladder.

"We can't do anything alone."

They made their way back silently to the men's camp, where Mr. Arkright challenged them, but released them with a laugh a moment after when he realized who they were. They told their story, and there was a quick council of war.

"Three brigands and three respectable citizens—the odds are all with the brigands," observed the Doctor. "Has anyone got a gun?"

"Not I," answered Mr. Gorton.

"Not I," answered Mr. Arkright.

"Not I," said the Doctor.

"It would be perfectly absurd to go after them then. We may be able to get the treasure though, after they are gone. In the morning we can get back to Santa Fé *muy pronto* and raise the alarm," said Mr. Gorton.

It was at this moment of whispered conference that two dark forms loomed up and a voice com-

manded something in Spanish. Mr. Gorton and Mr. Arkright both put their hands up and bade the Doctor do the same. But hardly had they done this when a disgusted oath came from one of the newcomers, who exclaimed in good American, "Say, what in thunder are you fellows doin' here, and where is Lobo?" It was two special officers who had been sent out by the railroad officials and who had tracked the robbers thus far. Dave and Mary were now brought forward and told what they had seen.

"Well, we oughter get them if you gents will help," said one of the officers.

"You bet we'll help, if you can lend us a gun," Mr. Gorton answered.

There were two extra pistols available which were handed over to Mr. Arkright and the Doctor, both of whom were good shots. Mr. Gorton went too, to add numbers, armed with a club. If I had been there, Dave and Mary would have remained behind. As it was, they followed afar off.

I slept peacefully until awakened by the sound of firing. I sprang up, found the children gone, ran down to where the men were supposed to be, found them gone, and then heard more shots. For a moment my heart stopped beating. Every possible danger flashed through my mind. I did not know where to go or what to do. The suspense did not last long, fortunately, for suddenly Mr. Gorton appeared.

"The Doctor sent me back to be sure you weren't

alarmed. He is dressing somebody's wounds. There's been a simply wonderful scrap. Mary and Dave found their brigands and the treasure, and you couldn't pry them loose from them with a crow-bar. I am sorry to say El Lobo escaped. Don't you want to come? The Doctor said to bring the small emergency case. Here it is. Come on."

In a moment I had my shoes on and we went together while he told me briefly of the events of the night, of the children's discovery, of the coming of the officers and of the fight. It seems that El Lobo, who was a powerful man, had broken through, probably wounded, and had leapt down the cliff, from which the ladder had been removed. Mr. Gorton put it up again, or I should never have reached that inner room above.

The brigands' fire was burning brightly, and by its light I saw the Doctor bandaging one of the officers. A sullen looking Mexican sat at one side of the cave, wounded and manacled, guarded by the other officer. The children and Mr. Arkright were at the back of the cave.

CHAPTER XX

THE MYSTERY OF THE EMPTY BOX

O MOTHER, look, look," cried Dave, as I entered with Mr. Gorton. "The brigands did just what we thought. They have a treasure place here—a hiding place in the wall."

Sure enough, a deep hollow had been excavated in the soft stone and in it was a big part of the loot from the train robbery. The strong box stood on the floor. A false front had been carefully put over the hole which could only be discovered by the most painstaking search, when in its proper place.

"They evidently haven't had this here long," said Mr. Arkright. "But it's a very clever piece of work, very clever."

"O, Mother, one of the Mexicans was shot and killed and El Lobo may be wounded, but he got away," cried Dave, running to me. "O, if we had only caught him!"

"Maybe we can put the screws on this fellow and make him squeal," observed the officer who was guarding the Mexican.

"You wouldn't torture him," cried Mary.

"No, just get him scared. But we've got the loot

anyway, and we won't hear from El Lobo for a while, I guess."

"I bet he won't show his face around here very soon," laughed Dave. "But you fellows ought to track him with bloodhounds."

"Huh, where you think you are," answered the officer who had spoken before. "Do you think they keep bloodhounds in Santa Fé?"

"Well, I didn't know, they ought to," replied Dave, who had been reading about Micah Clark and his adventure with the bloodhounds.

The Doctor next dressed the wound of the captive Mexican. One of the officers had been examining the ashes of the fire to see if anything in the way of unburned papers could be found that would identify the registered mail. Dave was beside him in an instant, poking about in an earnest way. Suddenly he cried out in excitement and rushed over to his father. "Look, Dad, isn't this part of the box you packed Mary's ring in?" he asked eagerly.

"Nonsense," answered the Doctor.

"But look, Dad, that was a box from a Boston drug store and see, here's part of the name on the box—"

"Dave, you've been to too many movies," said his father disgustedly. "But I suppose this might be a box from that drug store without being our box. Mary's ring must be safe in the bank by this time."

"I bet El Lobo has it. Do you want to bet on it?"

"No—and leave me alone. I can't dress this

wound properly with you prancing about and distracting me."

Dave returned to the officer and poured out his tale to his more sympathetic ears, while Mary, in great excitement, kept asking me if I thought it really was her box—and wasn't it silly of Dave—and didn't I think the ring was safe in the bank?

It was getting on toward morning now. The men helped the wounded officer down to our camp, where he was left to rest on one of the cots. I made them all some coffee. Then the prisoner was brought and left in charge of the Doctor, while Mr. Arkright, Mr. Gorton and the other officer went down into the valley to see if any trace could be found of the dead Mexican or El Lobo. Mary and Dave, having put on their shoes, begged so hard to be allowed to go too, that we had not the heart to refuse, especially as Mr. Gorton took their side.

"There's no more danger, and it is the chance of a lifetime," he pleaded.

I confess that I could not help wondering whether El Lobo might not be lurking about and come back for his treasure in the absence of all guards.

The Doctor tried to speak to his patient, but the Mexican understood no English and our Spanish was too limited to admit of conversation. So we sat in silence till the others returned.

"We found the body of the other greaser," said the officer, "and buried him. El Lobo has gone, curse him."

We had some breakfast, and then the three men with the children went up to the bandits' cave to get the treasure. The Doctor, with loaded pistol, still guarded the prisoner, while I collected the dishes and blankets. It was agreed that the two officers and the Doctor were to go back to Santa Fé at once, carrying the money and mail rescued from the bandits, while Mr. Gorton, Mr. Arkright, the children and I would follow with our camping things. It took some little time to get the wounded officer to the auto. Dave went down with them. He came back in great excitement.

"The tires are cut," he cried, "and the car's a mess—"

"Humph, some of Lobo's work," remarked Mr. Gorton, for he was guarding the prisoner now, while the Doctor assisted in carrying the wounded man. "They'll have to put him in our auto, unless that's tampered with also."

But fortunately the second machine, which had been left in a different spot, seemed to have escaped notice. Another council of war was held.

"The best thing to do is to leave the camping stuff here with Mr. Arkright and me and Dave," spoke up Mr. Gorton. "Let the Doctor drive the car back with the ladies on the front seat and the two officers, with the prisoner and the treasure in back."

After some little discussion this was agreed to.

"We'll come back for you as soon as possible," said the Doctor.

"Maybe we'll find someone on the way to send back," said the officer.

It was nearly eleven before the auto was filled with its precious and oddly assorted freight. Dave was overcome with excitement at the thought of staying behind with the two men, who had kept all that was left of the provisions, two guns and a supply of ammunition.

"You had best move your camp," called the officer, as we drove off.

Our trip was accomplished without mishap. We met several motorists, but no one was able or willing to go to the rescue of the rest of our party. We were so occupied with the care of our wounded man, for whom the journey must have been a painful one, that I had little leisure for worrying over those left behind.

The first houses of Santa Fé were a welcome sight. We drove straight to the hospital and left the wounded officer there. A crowd collected at once, and somehow, apparently without a word being spoken, the news spread among the Mexicans that there had been a brush with El Lobo and that some of the recovered loot from the train was in our automobile. What wonder that at our next stop, the gaol, we were at once surrounded. The officer took his prisoner in and left him in the hands of the law. Then he rejoined us and we pushed out of the crowd as well as we could and took the treasure to the municipal building.

"You folks will hear from us," said the officer

in parting, as he shoved aside a gawky young fellow in khaki who had crowded against the running board. "We'd never have got that stuff here if it hadn't been for you. I'll send a man out who can take the machine back to Puyé tonight, if you'll get some more grub. Just come back here as soon as you're ready to go. Don't forget to load up with gas. By the way," he added, "there was a reward offered. Those plucky kids ought to get some of it."

As we drove to the Gortons', Mary drew a sigh of relief. "O, but it was crowded. I am glad that smelly bandit is out of the way."

"And I am glad that wounded officer is off my hands. I didn't like the responsibility," observed the Doctor.

Our honking horn brought Trix and Phil out of the house at once.

"Where's Dave?" was Trix's first question.

Then Mrs. Gorton appeared to ask why we had returned so soon, and what we had done to her husband.

The Doctor told our story amid sundry corrections from Mary. I was relieved to find that Mrs. Gorton did not seem alarmed at her husband's being left behind. She urged us to come in, but we were anxious to get back to the hotel.

"I will get some provisions ready at once," she said. "You will not be able to get back till tomorrow. I know everyone will be hungry. But are you not too tired to go back there tonight, Doctor?"

"No, indeed, Mrs. Gorton. Seventy miles isn't

a long trip for a day, with half of it in the cool of the evening. But I want a change of clothes and a bite to eat first."

So after thanking Mrs. Gorton for her kindness to Trix, whom we took with us, we drove back to the hotel.

At half past four, the Doctor, having bathed and eaten, started off on his return journey.

"I will stop at the Gortons' for the food and at the government building for my guide," he said. "And don't you worry, for we'll be all right. Don't expect us till you see us—for we may go off on a spree."

"I hope you'll find El Lobo and ask him if he took my ring," called Mary.

"I don't believe we'll catch even a glimpse of him," answered her father.

I hated to see him go.

"I believe El Lobo will think we can't get away, and will come back for his loot with more of the gang," suggested Mary.

"That is a cheering thought," I answered. "We'll hope for the best."

Trix was full of her adventures, and now that she saw us again and knew us near, was anxious to get back to Phil and the burro. I, too, felt that Mrs. Gorton should be visited and hear all our story. So after an early and satisfying supper, we walked over to the Gortons' to give the details of the expedition while Trix visited her four-footed pet.

"Our men will not try to return till to-morrow,"

said Mrs. Gorton. "I am sure they will be all right. I have great confidence in Mr. Arkright, whom we have known for a long time. He is brave and resourceful, although you might not think it from his manner."

"If only El Lobo does not come back tonight to get the treasure," said Mary.

"Well, there will be four able-bodied men, with plenty of guns, to meet him," replied Mrs. Gorton, who did not seem at all alarmed.

"You certainly take it coolly," I said.

"Why not? There is no use in worrying. They won't allow themselves to be surprised. In such a place a thousand might well be stopped by three, if they are not taken unawares."

"I wish I were there with them. Dave is certainly lucky," remarked Mary enviously.

"Maybe he thinks you're lucky," suggested Mrs. Gorton. "It's probably hot and tiresome and they are hungry."

And so it turned out. The day passed but slowly for the three at Puyé.

CHAPTER XXI

THE SHOT THAT MISSED—AND OTHER GOOD FORTUNE

IT was as they sat about the supperless camp fire that Mr. Arkright suggested, "Perhaps El Lobo will come back for his treasure tonight. He may think that the two officers, one of whom is wounded, would be easy to capture, don't you know."

"I guess he's had enough," lazily answered Mr. Gorton. "Just the same, we don't take any risks. We'll keep watch turn and turn about and move off to a place far away from the treasure chamber."

"I wish Lobo would come. I'd love to get him, you bet," said Dave.

Mr. Arkright was examining his pistol.

"Let's see it, will you?" asked Dave.

"Be very careful. It is loaded," and Mr. Arkright handed the gun to the boy. "Don't point it at either of us. Never point a gun at anyone, even in fun," said the Englishman. "It is always the chap who thinks he knows it all, and is sure the gun is not loaded, who kills his friend."

"I'll point it at the cliff," laughed Dave, standing up. The next moment he gave a quick exclamation, "By Cracky!"

The two men looked around, and there, in the shadow back of them loomed a tall form.

"Point the pistol at him and shoot carefully, Dave," said Mr. Arkright, as coolly as if he had been standing on an English lawn.

The cloaked figure had a gun also. "Hands up," he said in perfectly good English.

"Don't shoot, Dave," yelled Mr. Gorton. At the same moment, Mr. Arkright took hold of the boy's hand and aimed it up in the air so that there should be no chance of an accident.

"Who on earth are you? No Mexican bandit ever talked with an accent like that," called Mr. Gorton.

The cloak was dropped and a young and rather crestfallen boy in khaki appeared.

"I came on the back of your friends' auto," he said sulkily. "I thought I'd scare you—"

It was at this moment that there came a loud call from below and the honking of a machine.

"My word, there they are," observed Mr. Arkright, while Dave and Mr. Gorton answered the call.

"You are a bally fool, young man," continued the Englishman. "You might have caused this little boy here to commit murder. You deserve a good thrashing."

"I thought it would be a good joke," answered the khaki-clad youth, still sulky.

"Well, if you think a wound from a pistol at close range a joke, you very nearly got it," answered Mr. Gorton. "I've a great mind to let you walk back

to Santa Fé. Maybe that will cure you of this funny business."

Dave was plainly disappointed. "I may never have another chance to shoot a bandit," he complained.

"You may be very thankful that you did not shoot this particular one, my boy," answered Mr. Arkright. "Though he isn't worth very much, my word."

A few minutes later they were joined by the Doctor and Scott, the officer, who had been delegated to act as his guide on the way from Santa Fé.

"Well, whom have you picked up?" asked the Doctor when he saw the make-believe bandit.

"It was you who brought him, Doctor," answered Mr. Gorton briskly. "He said he came on the back of your car; thought he'd scare us and have some fun. Dave nearly shot him. I don't know if that was part of the fun he was looking for!"

Everybody laughed except the stow-away. The Doctor looked at him sharply. "Weren't you the fellow who crowded us so in front of the courthouse this afternoon?" he asked. But the only answer was a sulky silence.

"I think Gorton's suggestion that he walk back to Santa Fé is a remarkably good one, don't you know," said Mr. Arkright. "And I say, old chap, that boy of yours is a cool one," he added, turning to the Doctor. "The bandit wasn't a bandit, you know, but the boy didn't know it and neither did we. When Dave grows up a bit, he ought to make a good tiger hunter."

"I didn't do anything—didn't have a chance," growled Dave disgustedly. "Say, Dad, did you bring any food?"

"We surely did."

This statement was greeted with joy and excitement. The camp fire was hastily freshened up and Mr. Gorton and Scott soon prepared a savory supper. Everyone was hungry and no one stood on ceremony. For a while the make-believe bandit watched them from afar.

"Aren't you going to give him anything?" whispered Dave to Mr. Arkright.

"Surely. We thought it would not hurt him to wait though."

"I don't see that he did anything bad. He just played a joke," said Dave.

"It is not the right kind of a joke, Dave," the Englishman answered gravely. "We would not be a very happy party now, don't you know, if your pistol had gone off and killed the lad."

"I guess you're right," answered Dave thoughtfully.

The next day the party arrived safely at Santa Fé. Dave had by this time come to the conclusion that he was glad he hadn't shot a bandit, but had been ready to.

Mary was greatly disappointed. "I did want you to get El Lobo and ask him if he took my ring," she said. "But I am sure it's safe in the bank. I have a sort of feeling that something is going to happen though. I can't believe that we will just

quietly slip off home. We've had so many excitements, I am sure something more will happen."

"I hope not. I think we have figured in enough movie plots," observed someone.

That evening, when we had just finished dinner and were seated on the hotel porch, a high official of the town, accompanied by a high official of the railroad, accompanied by Mr. Gorton and the officer who had been with us when the bandits were captured, arrived at the hotel. They drove up in state and we were introduced by Mr. Gorton.

"With the booty safe in our hands and two bandits captured, we are indeed fortunate," remarked the railroad manager. "Doctor, you are to be congratulated on two plucky children. We think they ought to have the reward offered for the return of the treasure."

"I am sure Mary and Dave would want your wounded officer and his companion to get some of it," said the Doctor.

"What do you say, David?" asked the manager.

"How much will it be?" asked the boy, which aroused a laugh from the rest of us.

"Two hundred and fifty dollars gold would be half," replied the manager.

"I guess that'll do for Mary and me, won't it, Mary?"

"Gracious, that's a lot of money. Can we do what we want with it?" cried Mary.

"What do you want to do with it?" asked the Manager.

"I don't know. But I'd like to feel it was mine."

"So would I," echoed Dave, while the Doctor observed, "we can discuss that later."

"Well," said the manager, "I think our two officers can be taken care of without dividing the reward. I assure you they will be satisfied. So I will send a check to you for the full amount in the morning. The company feels most grateful to you all, and we will see that you have every comfort possible on your trip east. And if you would like to come to my house tomorrow afternoon, I will show you personally any hospitality that lies in my power."

"Five hundred dollars," murmured Dave. "Mother, what can we do with it?"

We bade goodbye to the friendly officials and assured them that we were more than grateful, that we had expected no reward. Everyone shook hands and presently they departed, leaving us to discuss the large sum of money suddenly put into the possession of Dave and Mary.

Trix was much disgusted. She wanted a share in it. "I think you ought to buy a burro for me," she said.

The next morning brought a letter from the bank with the news that the ring had not yet been received.

"They have sent out a tracer, the letter says, but still hope it may be simply delayed. Registered mail often is," observed the Doctor.

"I bet El Lobo has it. Didn't I tell you that was the box?" said Dave.

"Well, it certainly looks queer. I think the ring is bewitched and we are well rid of it. It seems a little hard on the rest of the people that their train should have to be held up in order that Mary should lose her ring again."

"You can buy a new one with your share of the money," suggested Dave. "My physiology book says those old things are covered with germs."

"Oh, do stop talking about that physiology book. Dad, can't we do anything about the ring?" asked Mary.

"It may be among the stuff recovered," answered her father. "We will inquire this afternoon. And of course it may still be on its normal way east. But really, I am getting almost superstitious. I am half inclined not to do anything more to find it."

"If El Lobo has it, you'll never find it," remarked Dave.

"I am going to find it some day, if it takes years and all my reward money. I am going to get back that ring," said Mary.

Many inquiries were made, and the recovered booty was gone over carefully, but no trace of the ring could be found. There could only be one conclusion—if the ring did not turn up at the bank then Dave had been right. The fragment of box which he had found and had carefully preserved, must indeed have been the one which had been shipped from Taos with the ring inside of it.

"You'll never get it again," said Dave.

"I will," answered Mary.

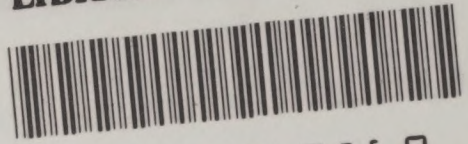
Two days later we bade goodbye to our good friends of Santa Fé, and Trix embraced the Gorton burro for the last time. When we reached the through train we found that two staterooms had been placed at our disposal by the road, and the most smiling of white-coated porters greeted us at the steps. Another took our baggage, which we were almost ashamed to hand to him on account of its sad condition and curious shapes and sizes. A large bouquet of beautiful flowers awaited us inside the car, and a letter informed us of the admiration and gratitude of the railroad. Mary and Dave and Trix hugged each other in their excitement.

"I do wish they could see us at home," cried Mary. "Isn't it fun, Daddy? I always did want to ride in a stateroom. If only my ring were not lost. But maybe they'll get it yet. If they don't—well—some day I will find it myself."

Then the bell clanged, and the whistle and puffing of the engine announced that our summer in New Mexico was over, and that we were on our way to the east and Homeward Bound.

NOV 18 1921

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00024769860